Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive

DSpace Repository

Theses and Dissertations | 1. Thesis and Dissertation Collection, all items

2013-03

MYTHS AND REALITIES OF MINIMUM FORCE IN BRITISH COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

Boer, Christopher B.

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

http://hdl.handle.net/10945/32796

Downloaded from NPS Archive: Calhoun

http://www.nps.edu/library

Calhoun is the Naval Postgraduate School's public access digital repository for research materials and institutional publications created by the NPS community. Calhoun is named for Professor of Mathematics Guy K. Calhoun, NPS's first appointed -- and published -- scholarly author.

Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
Monterey, California USA 93943

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

MYTHS AND REALITIES OF MINIMUM FORCE IN BRITISH COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

by

Christopher B. Boer

March 2013

Thesis Advisor: Douglas Porch
Second Reader: Arturo Sotomayor

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			*Form Approved OMB No. 0704–0188*
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202–4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704–0188) Washington, DC 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY ***(Leave blank)***	**2. REPORT DATE** March 2013	**3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE MYTHS AND REALITIES OF MINIMUM FORCE IN BRITISH COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE		**5. FUNDING NUMBERS**	
6. AUTHOR(S) Christopher B. Boer			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943–5000		**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		**10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER**	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		**12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE**	

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

Counterinsurgency scholars and notable counterinsurgents often credit minimum force doctrine, among other factors, for British success in Malaya, Kenya, and Cyprus. Minimum Force has become a prescriptive element for counterinsurgency warfare as a result, often with the understanding that gaining and retaining the population's "hearts and minds" is crucial to achieving victory. Also, minimum force proponents claim excessive force is anathema to that goal, insofar as it alienates the population and delegitimizes the government's efforts. Minimum force, however, was never a central component of British counterinsurgencies during the decolonialization era following World War II, and its continued inclusion among counterinsurgency formulas is unwarranted based on British experiences. The British relied primarily on coercion, reprisals, exemplary force, and forced relocations—tactics learned during the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921) and subsequent limited wars to starve the insurgents of the population's support.

14. SUBJECT TERMS British Counterinsurgency, COIN, minimum force, Cyprus, Malaya, Kenya, Irish War of Independence, Ireland, Palestine			**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 103
			16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	**18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE** Unclassified	**19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT** Unclassified	**20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT** UU

NSN 7540–01–280–5500 Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2–89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239–18

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

MYTHS AND REALITIES OF MINIMUM FORCE IN BRITISH COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

Christopher B. Boer
Major, United States Army
B.A., University of West Florida, 2002

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS SECURITY STUDIES
(DEFENSE DECISION-MAKING AND PLANNING)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
March 2013**

Author: Christopher B. Boer

Approved by: Dr. Douglas Porch
Thesis Advisor

Dr. Arturo Sotomayor
Second Reader

Dr. Harold Trinkunas
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

Counterinsurgency scholars and notable counterinsurgents often credit minimum force doctrine, among other factors, for British success in Malaya, Kenya, and Cyprus. Minimum Force has become a prescriptive element for counterinsurgency warfare as a result, often with the understanding that gaining and retaining the population's "hearts and minds" is crucial to achieving victory. Also, minimum force proponents claim excessive force is anathema to that goal, insofar as it alienates the population and delegitimizes the government's efforts. Minimum force, however, was never a central component of British counterinsurgencies during the decolonialization era following World War II, and its continued inclusion among counterinsurgency formulas is unwarranted based on British experiences. The British relied primarily on coercion, reprisals, exemplary force, and forced relocations—tactics learned during the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921) and subsequent limited wars to starve the insurgents of the population's support.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION....1
A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION....1
B. IMPORTANCE....2
C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES....3
D. LITERATURE REVIEW....6
E. THESIS OVERVIEW....9

II. THE ORIGINS OF MINIMUM FORCE....11
A. INTRODUCTION....11
B. AMRITSAR....13
C. THE TROUBLES....15
D. MINIMUM FORCE LESSONS FROM THE INTERWAR GENERATION TO THE NEXT....26

III. PALESTINE BECOMES THE NEW IRELAND....33
A. INTRODUCTION....33
B. PALESTINE 1929....33
C. PALESTINE 1936: THE ARAB REVOLT....37

IV. THE SLIDING SCALE OF "MINIMUM FORCE"....43
A. INTRODUCTION....43
B. PALESTINE....46
C. MALAYA....52
D. KENYA....60
E. CYPRUS....71

V. CONCLUSION....77

LIST OF REFERENCES....85

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST....89

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADRIC	Auxiliary Division
DOO	Director of Operations
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EOKA	*Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston*
GSU	General Service Unit
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IO	Information Operations
KAR	King's Africa Rifles
KPR	Kenyan Police Reserve
PPMF	Palestine Police Mobile Force
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I’m eternally grateful to Dr. Douglas Porch for his assistance and guidance throughout this process, despite my best efforts to sabotage this thesis at every turn. Magnanimity is rare, but Dr. Porch’s brand of altruism is rarer still. Dr. Arturo Sotomayor and Dr. Thomas-Durell Young inspired my interest in the topic, and I simply could not have written this thesis without their support while I was floundering without direction and possessing only a facile comprehension of the subject matter. I’m most grateful, however, to my wife, Jennifer, and my three children, Christopher, Ava, and Henry, who motivated me to complete my work when I felt that it couldn’t be done, and gave up their own time and interests to support mine.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Minimum force allegedly forms the bedrock principle of British counterinsurgency successes in the twentieth century. The idea of minimum force took root in the British army and Colonial Office in the wake of World War I, as counterinsurgency transitioned from "small wars" to "imperial policing." The disastrous handling of the Amritsar massacre of 1919 when British troops opened fire on a peaceful political protest killing approximately 1000 people, followed by the Irish Troubles (1919–1921), and the growth of nationalist movements in British colonial possessions in the inter-war years required a new doctrine that was more sensitive to public opinion and recognized the political nature of opposition to British rule. In the inter-war years, Sir Charles Gwynn's *Imperial Policing* (1934) and Colonel H.J. Simson's 1937 book *British Rule and Rebellion,* both of which became staff college staples into the 1950s, argued that the British Empire was witnessing a new type of conflict in which the political challenges blurred the traditional frontiers between peace and war. For this reason, the application of military force had to be made to conform to these new political realities and to the requirements of public opinion. Military force had henceforth to be constrained, guided by the civil authorities, preferably to supplement and reinforce the police rather than supersede them. "Aide to the civil power," the doctrine that now shaped British counterinsurgency, emphasized minimum force applied within the constraints of the law. In the post–World War II era, the idea of "aide to the civil power" and minimum force was reinforced by Sir Robert Thompson's 1966 book *Defeating Communist Insurgency,* a book that extrapolated "lessons" based on Britain's success in Malaya (1948–1960), supplemented by the writings of General Sir Frank Kitson.[1] The main academic underpinning for the arguments of these counterinsurgency theorists was provided by Tom Mockaitis' *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–1960*. Mockaitis argued

[1] Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971).

that minimum force applied within the legal constraints and directed by civil authorities helps to account for numerous British counterinsurgency successes in Malaya, Kenya, Northern Ireland, and elsewhere.[2]

This thesis will test the accuracy of this view. Its contention is that, far from applying a doctrine of minimum force, for most of the Cold War and beyond, British counterinsurgents employed free-fire zones, collective punishment, reprisal attacks, mass arrests with indefinite detention, extra-judicial killings, and in some cases approved bombing of entire villages if their small ground forces failed to achieve tactical victories. Many of these actions were taken in defiance of civilian authority as represented by the Colonial Office and even Westminster, which the military distrusted as "soft," appeasement minded, and eager to deny that they had a problem until the insurgency has assumed devastating dimensions. Rather than back small, underfunded imperial police forces considered untrustworthy because they relied on indigenous recruits, the military took the lead in operations, or backed racist settler militias intent on carrying out pogroms against the natives, as was the case in both Malaya and Kenya. Given these realities, this thesis will ask how the doctrine of minimum force evolved from 1919, through the colonial policing period of the interwar years, into the era of decolonialization in a manner anathema to the concepts of minimum force, as well as the factors that prevented adherence to it in order to determine the validity of minimum force as a prescriptive element.

B. IMPORTANCE

As a result of Britain's (increasingly disputed) record of success in counterinsurgency operations, minimum force has become a prescriptive component of low intensity or counterinsurgency doctrine. Because many military commanders look to lessons of history, for better or worse, to guide the development and execution of operational plans and tactical behavior, understanding the context of minimum force and its origins and application since the Second World War remains important to militaries that attempt to adopt the modern version of it in the execution of counterinsurgency

[2] Tom Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–1960* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

operations. British counterinsurgency successes, such as they were, were not a result, even in part, of the current understanding of minimum force. Nevertheless, some Counterinsurgency (COIN) experts, such as General David Petraeus in his authorship of FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* and General Stanley McChrystal in his restrictive rules of engagement in Afghanistan, treat minimum force as a political tool designed to win "hearts and minds" through the behavior of soldiers. FM 3-24 argues that, if properly treated, populations in insurgent-infested areas must side with counterinsurgents based on calculated self-interest. The assumptions are essentially those of Gwynn, Simson, Thompson, and Kitson—that the population is apolitical, passive, and pressured to act by bad actors in their midst.[3] If the population can be "protected" and won over by "hearts and minds" methods, the insurgency will become isolated and subsequently wither. The counterinsurgent notion – the mirror-image of Mao—is "the people" are both the prize and the determinate of success in counterinsurgency operations. Popular support is won in part through financial favors bestowed on indigenous leaders or factions who agree to support the counterinsurgents, but primarily by remaining "friendly" and limiting the use of force to gain legitimacy.[4] This thesis will argue that proportionality of force and "hearts and minds" tactics were notable by their absence in British counterinsurgency operations both before and after World War II. For this reason, contemporary counterinsurgents who base their doctrines on an erroneous understanding of the nature of British counterinsurgency "success" are bound to be misled.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

One source of the misunderstanding of the concept of minimum force as it has been applied in British counterinsurgency doctrine is that the British definition of "legal" behavior has proven to be increasingly at odds with the evolution of international humanitarian law (IHL) over the last century. In fact, it has proven easy for British jurists

[3] Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971); Sir Charles Gwynn, *Imperial Policing* (MacMillan and Co.: London, 1936); H.J. Simson, *British Rule and Rebellion* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1937).

[4] Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 2006), 1-28, 5-22, 7-7, D-2.

and soldiers to ignore IHL and define their own legal framework for counterinsurgency operations with the argument that IHL is designed for conventional war between uniformed combatants of sovereign nations, or in the case of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) of September 1953, to prevent a future Holocaust, not to deal with insurgencies organized among populations by criminals and terrorists. While the British government did not ratify the 1949 Geneva Conventions until 1957, it did purport to adhere to the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, as well as the ECHR, all of which served similar purposes regarding the treatment of civilians. However, as David French points out, the British would either ignore provisions which they found inconvenient, delay ratification of ostensibly restrictive international agreements such as Geneva, or use more permissive articles in the ECHR to justify behavior that was discouraged in other conventions.[5] The truth, however, is that the British refusal to adhere to international standards of human rights has "tactized" their strategies, delegitimized their operations in the public mind, and led at the very least to a prolongation of insurgencies (Northern Ireland) when it has not delegitimized them altogether—Palestine (1946–1947), Cyprus (1955–1960), and Aden (1964–67). Scholars have also revealed in recent years that the British army's signature counterinsurgency "successes" in Malaya (1948–1960) and Kenya (1952–1960) were won by using methods that far exceeded minimum force and legal constraints. The British government designated insurgents as criminals, therefore outside the purview of ratified IHL, to avoid adhering to the new standards of lethal force, population controls, forced labor, and collective punishment. They evoked article 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights during the so-called Mau Mau uprising in Kenya which allowed them to ignore its provisions if they faced an insurrection.[6]

A second constraint on the application of minimum force can be found in the character of civil-military relations during Cold War insurgencies insofar as the colonial authorities and settlers prevented general adherence to minimum force. Military aid to

[5] David French, *The British Way in Counter Insurgency, 1945–1967* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 230

[6] Ibid., 231.

civil power in colonial wars often found the character of operations influenced by a committee of British principals, stakeholders, and settlers, who insisted upon coercive methods and lethal force because of the personal stake they held in the land and the inherent racism that underpinned colonial rule. Additionally, these governments raised local forces that, although often led by ethnically British officers, were not held to the same standards of behavior in battle or accountability in their treatment of non-combatants. In other words, the concepts of legality and minimum force "went native."

Another hypothesis concerns the absence of minimum force practice among the operational and tactical leadership of both British military and police forces. Much like the British soldiers in Ireland from 1919–21 who were mostly veterans of the Great War, the Cold War soldiers were perhaps inexperienced altogether in counterinsurgency, or who like the senior World War II veterans, were principally focused on conventional operations and the prospect that they may reoccur in Europe in the 1950–1960 timeframe. In this case, minimum force was contrary to prior experience in and training for major combat operations, and they were suddenly expected to behave differently under dissimilar circumstances. Likewise, the idea that military force was moderated in counterinsurgency because it was deployed in support of the British colonial police forces also proved a misconception. British colonial police forces were militarized organizations modeled on the Royal Irish (and after 1921 the Royal Ulster) Constabulary. The RIC and RUC, which lived in barracks, drilled according to military manuals, and whose job was to keep an eye on Britain's potentially, and on occasion actively, disloyal Irish Catholic subjects, became the models for the Palestinian police, whose coercive paramilitary policing formed the nucleus of colonial police forces in Malaya, Kenya, Guiana, Cyprus, and elsewhere, supplemented in Malaya and Kenya in particular by racist settler auxiliaries. Attempts by civilian and on occasion by military leadership to reform their harsh methods were ignored by the police or otherwise proved ineffectual given an organizational culture of racism, reprisals, coercion, and an absence of effective mechanisms of accountability. Because the military and police forces lacked counterinsurgency training and were undisciplined, the proposed doctrine of minimum

force could not be reconciled to the security forces' primitive and brutal responses to enemy activity.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of the literature regarding British COIN focuses on the evolution and application of a doctrine of "minimum force" first introduced in Sir Charles Gwynn's 1934 *Imperial Policing* in reaction to the post–World War I disasters of Amritsar and the Troubles that led to the independence of Eire in 1921, both of which provided the tactical and operational foundation for the post–World War II British counterinsurgency doctrine.[7] For the period of "sub-war," or armed insurrection prior to World War II, *Imperial Policing* and H.J. Simson's *British Rule and Rebellion*(1937) provide the narratives for an examination of the British responses to several inter-war insurgencies although, the level of detail for key events, their level of success and impact on civil-military relations varies greatly.[8] Gwynn and Simson's books were staples of officer corps training in the period leading up to the wars of decolonialization and therefore influenced the theory of force application for counterinsurgents of the post–World War II era. Moreover, these books reflected a change in the popular views from C.E. Callwell's *Small Wars*, which advocated burning villages to punish the "savage" enemy, insofar as they acknowledged that the population in a colonial insurgency consisted of British subjects with a modicum of civic and legal rights.[9]

Many modern COIN scholars treat minimum force as a de facto ROE—a principle guiding operations regardless of its absence from official documents and a history of atrocities, violations of the law of war (despite lacking ratification of some international agreements), confusion over the limits of population control measures, the definition of "minimum" force in practice, or a combination of all of the above. Hew Strachan[10], Huw Bennett[11], Rod Thornton[12], Thomas Mockaitis[13], Bruno Reis,[14] David

[7]Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 13–15.

[8] H.J. Simson, *British Rule and Rebellion* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1937).

[9] C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: General Staff, War Office, 1906 reprinted 1914), 23, 40.

[10] Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

French,[15] and others have written extensively on the theory versus the reality of British COIN.

The debate about absolute or relative minimum force reveals considerable impediments to the application of each. Reis acknowledges, like the British army COIN manual, that minimum force doctrine was an important, if not the "dominant label" of British counterinsurgency.[16] Reis also acknowledges that the tendency in COIN scholarship involves the treatment of minimum force as the "minimum level possible" as opposed to Gwynn's relative force applied according to situational demands.[17] Mockaitis attributes this revisionism to the changing attitudes toward coercion and even the use of force itself—that is, because views of the military and imperialism have become less favorable, and information previously unavailable regarding harsh methods applied during counterinsurgency operations have come to light, scholars have focused on indicting the British for crimes that were not illegal at the time or pointing out the hypocrisy of a absolute minimum force that did not exist.[18] Huw Bennett falls into this latter camp, as he questions the centrality of minimum force doctrine given British actions in Kenya. He applies the concepts of international law to bolster his argument, stating the British violated Geneva Conventions, despite the fact that London ratified the Geneva Conventions years following the insurgency's end.[19] Bennett does, however,

---

[11]Huw Bennett, "The Other Side of the COIN: Minimum and Exemplary Force in British Army Counterinsurgency in Kenya," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18, no. 4 (2007), 638–664.

[12] Rod Thornton, "The British Army and the Origins of Its Minimum Force Philosophy." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 15, no. 1 (2004), 83–106.

[13] Thomas Mockaitis, "The Minimum Force Debate: Contemporary Sensibilities Meet Imperial Practice," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (September 2012), 762–780.

[14] Bruno Reis, "The Myth of British Minimum Force in Counterinsurgency Campaigns During Decolonization (1945–1970)," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 2011), 245–279.

[15] David French, "Nasty Not Nice: British Counter-Insurgency Doctrine and Practice, 1945–1967," Small *Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (December 2012): 744–761.

[16] Reis, "The Myth of British Minimum Force," 247; Army Field Manual Volume 1, Combined Arms Operations, *Counter Insurgency Operations (Strategic and Operational Guidelines) – Part 10*, (Army Code 71749, July 2001), 3–24.

[17] Reis, "The Myth of British Minimum Force," 248.

[18] Mockaitis, "The Minimum Force Debate," 762–763.

[19] Bennett, "The Other Side of the COIN," 639.

show how IHL, especially the UN's Declaration of Human Rights ratified in 1948 and the European Convention on Human Rights of 1953, forced the British government to claim that because insurgents were criminals, London was under no obligation to accord them humanitarian treatment. At the very least, this was an embarrassment to a British government that aimed to project an image of civility and bequeath a legacy of "Britishness" to its colonial wards.[20] In Malaya, for instance, Templer ran a public-relations campaign to show the centrality of a magnanimous version of "hearts and minds" in the role of neutralizing the insurgency.[21] However, emphasizing the role of a few public services appeared to be a patent attempt to downplay the role of forced relocation of Chinese immigrants to detention camps, sealed off with barbed wire and guard towers.[22] Rod Thornton, in a reply to Bennett's article, also adopts a view of absolute minimum force, but blames the British excesses on white settlers or locally raised forces that were not educated in the same culture of Victorian values nor held to the same operational and tactical standards as were regular units.[23] In a subsequent reply to Thornton, Bennett identifies the primary concern with analyzing minimum force on a qualitative or quantitative basis: "As such, the concept is virtually meaningless in analytical terms, because it lacks clear criteria for judging when it applies and when it does not."[24] The term always applies, if understood in the manner described by Sir Charles Gwynn. However, the degree and scope of force is determined by the commander on the ground, usually a battalion, company, or squad commander, and is therefore likely to be completely arbitrary. Absolute minimum force advocates will more likely encounter "excessive violence" in military responses to insurgent provocation, Bennett argues.[25]

---

[20] Ibid., 642–644.

[21] Georgina Sinclair, *At the End of the Line: Colonial Policing and the Imperial Endgame, 1945–80* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 74

[22] French, *The British Way*, 175.

[23] Thornton, "Minimum Force: A Reply to Huw Bennett," 215–216.

[24] Bennett, "Minimum Force in British Counterinsurgency," 466.

[25] Ibid., 468.

Studies of British military and police organizational culture demonstrate great impediments to the application of minimal violence and to the attempts of some civilian and military leaders to impose it. For example, Georgina Sinclair's *At the End of the Line: Colonial Policing and the Imperial Endgame 1945–80* supplements the former authors' focus on the military by discussing the often neglected role of the colonial police, specifically in Palestine, Malaya, Cyprus, , Kenya, and Aden.[26]While William Sheehan[27] and D.M. Leeson[28] have written detailed accounts of military and police tactics during the Irish War of Independence in 1919–21, Sinclair shows how tactical violence and reprisals employed by the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Auxiliaries--former British officers recruited to act as a mobile strike force against IRA insurgents--permeated the colonial police throughout the empire as RIC veterans and their heirs in the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) were transferred to colonial posts or invited to train colonial police forces, a role that devolved in part on the RUC. The Colonial Office made multiple attempts to impose a civil policing style with absolute minimum force on the colonial police, but the inability or unwillingness of the Colonial Office to micromanage the behavior of a force regarded as the colony's first line of defense, one which required military training and organization to carry out its mission, limited the impact of reforms.[29]

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis will examine the historical record of the British Army and colonial police forces beginning with the 1919 War of Independence and ending with the wars of decolonialization following World War II. Chapter II will show the origins of minimum force doctrine in Amritsar, India, in 1919 paralleled with the British execution of the Irish War of Independence as the default setting of counterinsurgency practice. Chapter III will show how those institutional lessons from Ireland were perpetuated and amended to

[26] Georgina Sinclair, *At the End of the Line: Colonial Policing and the Imperial Endgame, 1945–80* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006).

[27] William Sheehan, *A Hard Local War: The British Army and the Guerilla War in Cork 1919–1921* (Gloucestershire: Spellmount, 2011).

[28] D.M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[29]Georgina Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 69–74.

include adaptations based on new weapon systems and tactics, leaving Palestine's colonial police as the new standard bearer for British counterinsurgency. Chapter IV will examine the manifestation of minimum force doctrine in light of post-WWII international laws barring many standard British tactics, and the government's effort to maintain the status quo in spite of those laws. The examination of minimum force in Kenya, Malaya, and Cyprus—as putative victories for the counterinsurgents—will show that the institutional learning from Ireland and Palestine vis-à-vis coercion and collective punishments prevailed over insincere proclamations of minimum force adherence by both the civil leadership and the top military practitioners.

II. THE ORIGINS OF MINIMUM FORCE

A. INTRODUCTION

The notion of minimum force as a central doctrinal tenant conducive to successful counterinsurgency operations is largely a myth. This myth has been perpetuated by the British government, by noteworthy British counterinsurgency theorists and practitioners such as Robert Thompson and Frank Kitson as well as several scholars of counterinsurgency like Thomas Mockaitis and John Nagl.[30] The myth, however, has a basis in reality. What constitutes minimum force"lies in the eye of the beholder. Resettlement camps or preventative detention, even collective punishments, can be justified in the name of security for the greatest number as a tactic of relative restraint. Those on one side of a civil/tribal/ethnic conflict may believe that the other side has escaped lightly even when punishments and reprisals rain down upon them. That said, there are long-standing standards that lay out permissible behavior in the conduct of hostilities—*jus in bello*—which have been progressively codified since the middle of the nineteenth century. These have frequently been ignored in counterinsurgencies for variety of reasons, among them racism; the conviction that insurgents are not "lawful combatants"; a belief that the populations who hide and supply them need to be taught a lesson or simply removed; or to escape civilian oversight of operations among them. For these reasons, one premise of this thesis is that minimum force is a myth propagated by British counterinsurgents as part of an Information Operations (IO) campaign to sell the operation as a moral and legal enterprise to a British and a larger Western public skeptical of the value of counterinsurgency endeavors. The British government mandated the minimum force doctrine through the Hunter Commission, which investigated the 1919 Amritsar massacre and declared that in subsequent imperial policing operations,

[30] Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (New York: Frederick A Praeger, 1966); Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010); Thomas Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency 1919–60* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1990); John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

British forces must use only the minimum force necessary to quell a disturbance.[31] Sir Charles Gwynn's 1934 *Imperial Policing*, required reading in British staff colleges into the post–World War II years, argued that this "minimum" level of required force was an elastic concept that depended on circumstances.[32]

The imprecision of that definition renders minimum force objectively meaningless. Historically, the arsenal of tactics available to British counterinsurgents has included collective punishment, reprisals, free-fire zones, forced relocation torture, preventative/indefinite detention, house destruction, forced labor, summary executions, extra-judicial killings, and other refinements of population-centric warfare. Many of these tactics have not only been used by the British army, but also by colonial police forces, who transmitted them through the Royal Irish Constabulary and its heir since 1922 the Royal Ulster Constabulary, that trained many colonial policemen throughout the empire. As a result, harsh methods were institutionalized both before and after World War II for use in Palestine, Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, Aden, and other British possessions and protectorates. The colonial police, locally raised "auxiliary" police and military forces, and to a lesser extent the British army, succeeded in counterinsurgency through separating the population from the insurgents through coercion, forced relocation, or food controls that aimed literally to starve the insurgents. However, minimum force applied only selectively, despite the government's increased insistence that the doctrine be applied more consistently in counterinsurgency operations. Local and international media, as well as international humanitarian law, often forced the British government to feign compliance with minimum force if the matter could not be avoided, as was the case with the delayed ratification of the Geneva Conventions in 1957.[33] The extent to which Britain violated the limits of minimum force and IHL in its post–WWII counterinsurgency campaigns has only recently become obvious as documents have become declassified and scholars have looked more closely at the conduct of those

[31] Hunter Commission Report, 64, http://archive.org/stream/ape9901.0001.001.umich.edu/ape9901.0001.001.umich.edu_djvu.txt.

[32] Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 14.

[33] French, *The British Way*, 230.

campaigns. As a result, the notion that minimum force was central to winning "hearts and minds," or at least preventing the population from siding wholly with the insurgents, has been brought into question. If minimum force was not a central tenant of British COIN, then the entire basis for success in counterinsurgency operations is brought into question, as is the notion that COIN doctrine with its emphasis on persuasion rather than force defines a category of warfare distinct from that of conventional operations.

B. AMRITSAR

Minimum force doctrine was born out of two post–World War I nationalists rebellions—one in India and the other in Ireland. Amritsar, India would provide the impetus for the evolution of the "doctrine," while the Troubles in Ireland would show the consequences of failing to use minimum force. On 13 April 1919, General Reginald Dyer's order to fire without constraint upon unarmed civilians gathered unlawfully in Amritsar gave birth to minimum force doctrine. On 11 April, Dyer had arrived in the city where police had nearly abdicated control to demonstrators protesting the arrests of two activists of the Indian Independence Movement.[34] The next day, he led a column onto the streets and encountered some protesters, but they dispersed after he warned that lethal force would be used; Dyer subsequently drew up a warning proclamation stating violence would be punished by courts-martial, and all gatherings were prohibited.[35] On 13 April, the government in Delhi placed the Punjab under martial law, which prohibited political demonstrations. The extent to which this proclamation was promulgated in the city remains in question. In *Imperial Policing*, Sir Charles Gwynn acknowledges that "General Dyer's proclamation was read only at points all within the western half of the city, as he decided that the heat had become too trying to the escort to allow a complete circuit to be made."[36] Dyer received intelligence that locals intended to hold a protest meeting at Jillianwala Bagh, a garden near the Golden Temple holy to the Sikhs in the afternoon of the 13th. He subsequently led a small force of about fifty soldiers to either

[34] Charles Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 46–48, 58.

[35] Ibid., 49.

[36] Ibid., 51.

prevent or punish the gathering, depending on its progress. The Jillianwala Bagh was a depression with high walls and few exits, which became a death trap for those at the meeting unable to escape once Dyer gave the order, without warning, to his troops to open fire on the crowd. General Dyer estimated the casualty count at approximately 300 killed, a figure that was later revised to 379 killed and over 1000 wounded (Indian nationalists put the figure far higher).[37]

In October 1919, the Disorders Inquiry Committee, better known as the Hunter Commission after its chairman Lord William Hunter, was convened to investigate the disturbances and the British reaction to them. Gwynn's analysis of the event oscillates between the two divergent views of Dyer as savior and villain, noting that "political pressure" called for the Hunter Commission's denunciation of Dyer's actions despite the opposing perception that he prevented a "dangerous situation" from escalating into a total revolt in the region.[38] The Hunter Commission's report, however, stated: "If necessary a crowd that has assembled contrary to a proclamation issued to prevent or terminate disorder may have to be fired upon; but continued firing upon the crowd cannot be justified because of the effect such firing may have upon people in other places. The employment of excessive measures is as likely as not to produce the opposite result to that desired."[39] In a 2004 article, Rod Thorton argues that the Hunter Commission's decision was not the birth of minimum force doctrine, stating that the massacre caused such revulsion among the British because national ethics long demanded minimum force throughout the Victorian era.[40] Of course, the use of concentration camps and other draconian methods that targeted the civilian population to crush the Boer resistance in South Africa two decades prior to Amritsar, in addition to the harsh methods used by counterinsurgents during the Irish Troubles rather contradicts this assertion. Minimum force was, before 1919, the exception, not the rule. The lesson of Amritsar for most British soldiers was that, despite the fact that Dyer's actions were upheld by the Army

[37] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 21.

[38] Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 34–35.

[39] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 23.

[40] Rod Thornton, "The British Army and the Origins of its Minimum Force Philosophy," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*15, no. 1 (2006).

Council, neither this nor the fact that the Punjab had been under martial law in April 1919 saved Dyer's career. On the contrary, he had been relieved of command and denied a decoration already approved, which sent an unequivocal message of the dangers of excessive force, even if events and regulations apparently justified it.

C. THE TROUBLES

The 1919–1921 Irish War of Independence and the methods of counterinsurgency that crown forces institutionalized on the basis of that experience became doctrine in a vacuum of policy and guidance from civil authority, or oftentimes in spite of that guidance. The British counterinsurgency in Ireland was an atypical colonial insurgency for several reasons: the proximity of Ireland allowed Sinn Fein, the Irish independence party, to publicize more effectively the coercive nature the British military and police actions, and take advantage of the British legal system in securing recompense or avoiding conviction through rendering courts ineffective or inoperative. The Irish, like the Boers, were also white, which put them in a category different form other imperial subjects and more likely to elicit popular sympathy in an era when it was less likely to be extended to colonial peoples of color. Finally, the Troubles played out in the wake of World War I when publicizing the barbarity, both real and imagined, of the German occupation of Belgium had been a central pillar of the Allied propaganda campaign to elicit support for the Allied cause. The notion that British law enforcement could behave with a degree of barbarity hitherto associated with the Hun shocked British public opinion. Thomas Mockaitis explains the failure of the British counterinsurgency in Ireland thusly: "The British defeat in Ireland stemmed in large measure from a failure to exercise restraint in a conflict that occurred in a window front. This failure to apply rigorously the principle of minimum force resulted in turn from a misunderstanding of the nature of the Irish struggle. From the War Office to the common soldier, the army believed that it was fighting a war, not quelling disturbances."[41] By 1921, however, Sinn Fein and the IRA were close to defeat when the government capitulated and began negotiating terms of the truce. The government did occasionally insist upon minimum

[41] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 20.

force in the execution of offensive operations and denied requests to implement more draconian measures, like concentration camps, in Ireland. It is also true that army units curtailed reprisals, but this was done mainly in the attempt to restore discipline which became frayed once soldiers were unleashed on the population. It is equally the case that police forces composed of the RIC and Auxiliary Division ("Auxies" or ADRIC), and attached soldiers fought a war of vicious coercion and retaliation. Crown forces lost the struggle because Sinn Fein forced the British government to the negotiating table and secured a truce. But not before crown forces basically thwarted every tactical challenge thrown up by the IRA, forcing the IRA to regress back to terrorism. Perhaps for the first time, successful tactical repression by crown forces because of its brutality gained sympathy for the insurgency both among the populations of Ireland and Great Britain, which led to strategic failure. But the take away from Ireland, one passed on to subsequent generations of security forces throughout the empire, was that repressive, even brutal tactics, were effective. The problem lay with domestic public opinion that, repelled by the barbarity required to win counterinsurgency operations, pressured the government to surrender.

Early in the conflict, the Army imitated the RIC in carrying out unofficial reprisals on the population in response to IRA attacks. However, realizing that this was having an adverse effect on the population, somewhat taken aback by the excesses of the RIC reinforced by the so-called Black and Tans and especially the Auxiliary forces, and concerned that discipline was eroding in the ranks as reprisals became the order of the day, the Army leadership worked to curtail extra-legal practices. This would suggest recognition of the benefits of the principles of minimum force. The truth of the matter, however, is less noble but far less severe and pervasive than Sinn Fein propaganda led many to believe—to this day, the popular understanding of the Troubles involves the repeated excesses of force by an army of occupation, sanctioned by the government, which relied upon brutality to neutralize the insurgents. Unofficial reprisals by the army were usually the result of alcohol coupled with the death of a comrade or affronts to female companions. In the cases of a soldier's death, the army often became frustrated with a lack of justice from the local courts, if any inquiry were held at all. General

Macready, the Commander in Chief in Ireland, understood the police and army's resort to reprisals, because the judicial system had completely broken down under intimidation from the IRA:

> Formerly, in Ireland, if a police officer were murdered there was no thought of direct reprisals in the mind of the RIC. They thought only of justice, confident that they would be dealt with quickly and adequately by the courts. But now the machinery of the law having been broken down, they feel there is no certain means of redress and punishment, and it is only human that they should act on their own initiative.[42]

In September of 1919, members of the IRA attacked a church procession of soldiers of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, seizing weapons and killing one Private William Jones, who was approximately one week away from being discharged and marrying his fiancée.[43] The Fermoy jury failed to convict the accused murderers, aggravating an already vengeful disposition among the soldiers. After a night of some drinking, the soldiers and a handful of NCOs began to riot in the town, destroying windows, and targeting places of business while town locals looted the newly vented stores. A junior officer of the regiment later wrote in his memoirs, "The troops had worked out a splendid plan. First they send a screen ahead of the main body to clear the streets, ordering everybody who was on foot into their houses to stay there. Then a demolition party proceeded to every shop and place of business of the members of the jury who had brought in their infamous verdict."[44] The violence was neither indiscriminate nor intentionally physically abusive toward individuals, although one report indicated several civilians were hurt by broken glass and errant missiles.[45] The soldiers aimed to punish the jury members not by harming them or their families directly, but by targeting their financial interests and property. Subsequent unofficial reprisals by the army, however, were more violent with less discrimination in targeting. The lack of discipline, and not necessarily the reprisals themselves, would cause the Army leadership

---

[42] Sheehan, *A Hard Local War*, 102.

[43] Ibid., 25.

[44] Ibid., 34.

[45] James Donnelly Jr., "Unofficial' British Reprisals and IRA Provocations, 1919–1920: The Cases of Three Cork Towns," *Ireland* 45, no 1–2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 157.

to restore discipline by forbidding the reprisals and instituting some preventative measures.

The population, too, learned that taunting soldiers didn't pay. For example, on November 9, 1919, residents in the city of Cork exchanged shouts and blows with soldiers over access to the local women. The RIC arrived shortly afterward and ordered the soldiers to disperse. However, a group of civilians followed the soldiers, taunting them en route to the barracks, which caused the soldiers to charge the crowd, necessitating a second intervention by the RIC.[46] In the towns of Bandon and Cobh, the soldiers took to the streets destroying primarily property, this time setting fire to buildings and also targeting the housing areas of the poor, which William Sheehan, in *A Hard Local War*, blames on the soldiers' ignorance regarding the town's geography and composition.[47] Following these reprisals, locals quickly learned not only to refrain from giving the soldiers cause to riot, but also to avoid them altogether, as was the case during the last army reprisal in Mallow, September of 1920. The IRA attacked a nearby military barracks and killed a Sergeant Gibbs in the process. The *Cork Examiner* detailed the exodus of villagers as the town was being set on fire:

> A great many of the residents, fearing reprisals, left the town during the day and spent the night with friends in the countryside. They were fortunate, for those who remained behind had a terrible ordeal. With blazing building all around, and with the prospect of venturing on the street only a little less dangerous, their position was a trying one, but they did not waste time in weighing the alternatives; their houses were threatened, and they were powerless to save them, so taking what belongings they could put together they sought refuge in the open fields.[48]

This reaction by the villagers was markedly different from those a year before. The actions of the Cork residents versus those of Mallow a year later show a population that had learned that it was futile to oppose soldiers intent on destroying their property. The lesson learned by the army was not that such reprisals would discourage the IRA from attacking a barracks or murdering soldiers out on the town with Irish women. Instead, the

---

[46] Ibid., 37.

[47] Sheehan, *A Hard Local War*, 36.

[48] Ibid.

army discovered that localized, unsanctioned violence could intimidate most of the Irish into a defenseless state, even if the latter previously experienced the soldiers' wrath only by proxy.

The end of unofficial army reprisals came from a desire to restore the military's discipline among the lower ranks (despite sympathy from the officers and senior leadership), not from the notion that further reprisals would cause the population to facilitate attacks by the IRA or support Sinn Fein more readily. Unofficial reprisals by the Army were typically conducted and led by enlisted men. IRA sympathizers and volunteers insisted to the local papers that officers led these reprisals, although the evidence for this in the *Irish Independent* seems to be village gossip, insofar as these assertions were "publicly stated all over the town that some of the officers took part with the men in the shop-wrecking outrage—officers in mufti."[49] British army accounts naturally differ. Only one memoir implicates a British officer named Godfrey leading soldiers in the Fermoy reprisals while carrying an entrenching tool handle.[50] Usually, a combination of army officers and the RIC ended the reprisals and ushered the soldiers back to their barracks. General Macready saw the need to end the reprisals altogether, although his motive was not adherence to minimum force. In a private letter to Henry Wilson, who shared Macready's disdain for Sinn Fein and the IRA, Macready said, "no-one with the interests of the Army at heart can for a moment approve of [unofficial] reprisal."[51] Wilson and Macready began punishing the leading participants in the reprisals while other officers, such as General Strickland of the Sixth Division, increased the operations tempo to keep the men occupied and therefore decrease the risk of reprisals stemming from frustration caused by the IRA's ostensible legal invulnerability.[52] The army also created summary courts martial and even sanctioned the execution of IRA operatives captured with weapons to eliminate the need of reprisals and re-impose discipline.

---

[49] Donnelly, "British Reprisals," 157–158.

[50] Sheehan, *A Hard Local War*, 40.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., 44–45.

From 1919, the RIC was reinforced by an influx of former (primarily English enlisted) soldiers who, because their uniforms were a composite of army khaki and RIC black, were called the "Black and Tans." The counterinsurgency was further reinforced by former British officers grouped into the Auxiliary Division (ADRIC) which was a mobile force to rush to the aid of static RIC detachments. ADRIC and the RIC would employ the most coercive force during the Troubles in the form of house burnings, beatings, and extrajudicial killings. Mockaitis blames the excesses of ADRIC and the Black and Tans on the fact that their membership was comprised of former soldiers who were "unused to police discipline" and, "in addition to violating the principle of minimum force, they lacked the confidence of the Irish people and so had great difficulty in developing intelligence contacts."[53] D.M. Lesson, in *The Black and Tans*, argues on the contrary that it was "police discipline" that was the problem. He points out that while Irish nationalist folklore attributes atrocities to the former English soldiers and veterans of the Great War incorporated into the RIC, in fact they were mainly bystanders as Irish veterans of the RIC with extensive local knowledge targeted supporters of Sinn Fein and the IRA for reprisals.[54] The assumption that the Black and Tans were an organization separate from the RIC rather than merely English reinforcements integrated into RIC ranks allowed nationalists subsequently to present the Troubles as a popular Irish rebellion against English colonialism, rather than as an Irish civil war.

The most destructive counterinsurgency organization proved to be the Auxiliaries, the forerunners of the Special Night Squads, "ferret forces" and other special operations innovations that were institutionalized in British counterinsurgency approaches. Major General Henry Tudor, a veteran of the Boer War, thought it best to militarize the RIC's auxiliaries for use as raiders, as well as institute several reforms that will prove eerily similar to methods used later in Malaya and elsewhere:

> The government . . . should replace the civil courts with military tribunals; introduce identity cards and passports; restrict changes of residence; deport Irish prisoners to Britain; and levy fines and other collective

[53] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 70.

[54] Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, 195.

> punishments on disturbed districts . . . . "The whole country was intimidated," he said, "and would thank God for stern measures."[55]

The RIC and Auxiliary Division took cues from the reprisals by soldiers in the early stages of the war by targeting the property of IRA volunteers, members of Sinn Fein, and their supporters. Burning houses and commercial property became a common occurrence. In a study of house-burning by the IRA as well as crown forces, James Donnelly Jr. suggests police sometimes welcomed violence from the IRA to use as an excuse for reprisals attacks involving arson, throughout the counties but mainly in Cork. However, the frequency with which the RIC employed coercive and punitive methods intimates that they and ADRIC needed little to no provocation for employing such tactics.[56] D.M. Leeson notes that historians often characterize police and auxiliary reprisals as "blind, idiotic, indiscriminate; however, the targeting of certain commercial buildings—especially creameries—shows an understanding of how best to hurt the population and, in the hopes of police, condition the people into a state of submission.[57] Given the importance of the dairy industry in much of Ireland, bombing creameries functioned as a collective punishment, with as many as 800 small farms contributing to a creamery, as was the case in Achonry of Sligo County.[58] Attacks against these interests injured entire counties and forced the inhabitants to refocus their efforts on sustaining themselves and their families. Otherwise, reprisals were fairly typical in their execution, with the Sack of Balbriggan earning the honor of most publicized, and, perhaps as a result, a contributing factor to Mockaitis' argument that Amritsar and instances of brutality during the Anglo-Irish war altered the levels of violence deemed acceptable by the British people, leading to an insistence that crown forces maintain a perpetual adherence to minimum force.[59] On 20 September 1920, the RIC attempted to destroy the town of Balbriggan, where a RIC constable had been assassinated—the RIC attacked,

---

[55] Ibid., 33.

[56] James Donnelly Jr., "Big House Burnings in County Cork During the Irish Revolution, 1920–21," *Ireland* 47, no. 3–4 (Fall / Winter 2012).

[57] Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, 122, 169, 173.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 18–19.

"killing two men, looting and burning four public houses, destroying a hosiery factory, and damaging or destroying 49 private houses."[60] One of the most violent counties, Galway, became relatively pacific following a large reprisal attack in which police began hunting IRA volunteers, firing wildly in the streets, setting fire to houses then shooting locals attempting to put the fires out.[61] In addition to these horrors, the police also destroyed the printing capacity of the local paper, announced a curfew, and destroyed the businesses that were boycotting crown forces in the area.[62] This brutality worked on the tactical level. Clearly, the lessons from 1919–1921 for the counterinsurgents was not minimum force, but rather that indiscriminate violence against the population was effective and ought to be replicated.

The Army and the RIC both believed that coercion and large-scale operations were conducive to victory. In *British Rule and Rebellion*, H.J. Simson provides an example of the military and civil authorities failing to communicate and coordinate after receiving advanced warning of an ambush, which produced several casualties among the security forces, as well as the kidnapping of a local magistrate near Dunbog. In the conclusion meant to show the importance of civil-military cooperation, Simson notes that collective punishment was the immediate reaction by crown forces, and, because it was successful, implicitly advocates such responses to insurgents' actions:

> That evening, the question of punishment was considered. There was no hope for any of the wounded police, and the resident magistrate was probably dead already. Nine good men were dead or dying. The punishment was prompt and severe. Dwellings close by the scene of the ambush, the inhabitants of which had fled, instead of bringing warning, had been burnt already by order of the officer on the spot. Rebel halls and meeting-places in the neighbouring market towns were burnt that night. A search was made for seven out of twenty-one rebel leaders on the intelligence list, and their houses, from which they had fled, were burnt . . . . Next day an order was issued and posted, giving the inhabitants forty-eight hours in which to produce the body of the magistrate, dead or alive,

[60] Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, 26.

[61] Ibid., 45.

[62] Ibid., 46.

> failing which there would be punishment twice as heavy. They produced the body dead within the time limit.[63]

As a staff college book, the lesson of this passage is clear to officers learning how to prosecute "sub-war." The insurgents had acted outside of the realm of offenses requiring a minimum force response. By its actions, the IRA was no longer entitled to the same relatively benign treatment afforded to unarmed rioters. The IRA was responsible for an ambush, and the civilian population was complicit, so it too had to pay the price for murdering crown forces. Simson also intimates that such methods of response are conducive to gaining the reluctant hearts and minds of the same population that stood idly by as policemen were ambushed and killed, in addition to the kidnapped magistrate:

> . . . and in the end the civil power neither approved nor disapproved. However, positive action did help the neutrals to rally to the stronger side, and there was peace for many weeks. Bands trying to arrange ambushes were chased away by farmers, afraid that they might lose all they had if any ambush took place near their homes. Things went reasonably well till the civil power intervened again and published a decree allowing inhabitants to claim for their injuries inflicted on them by the police or military maliciously, that is, illegally by the standards of normal times . . . . Ambushes became fashionable again, because nobody who could get a nice new farm for a rotten old one took any further interest in his common law duty to give warning of intended murder."[64]

Again, the only lesson an officer in the British army or police can take away is that the state must show resolve through force. This resolve will in turn engender compliance among the "neutrals" and show them that the government is the stronger side and therefore the inevitable victor—were it not for meddlesome government agents. Outright brutality would also teach a similar lesson. The lesson is anathema to minimum force as popularly understood today, but not within the context of "aide to the civil power" among officers. This is the beginning of the divergence in the practice and understanding of minimum force as the central component of hearts and minds.

The perception of success with the failed "special military areas" perpetuated their use during and decades after the Anglo-Irish War. These areas were punitive in

---

[63] Simson, *British Rule and Rebellion*, 75–76.

[64] Ibid., 76–77.

nature, disrupting or completely shutting down trade, with curfews and restrictions on movement outside of the areas—similar to those "special areas" employed by the British in Malaya decades later, and the designation of "criminal tribes" upon which restrictions were heaped in India. Concerns about alienating the locals caused some special military areas to be abandoned. However, many officers in both the army and the RIC believed they were useful in separating the insurgents from the population and ensuring the latter's compliance with the government's goals. They also gave the officials legal cover for extremely coercive methods. The RIC Inspector General in 1918 claimed, "the punitive action by the Commander in Chief in placing certain disturbed areas under military control, and the generally increased rigour in dealing with the seditious movement have had a satisfactory and deterrent effect." Sir John French echoed that sentiment: "the unruly elements have been brought to realize that the Government are determined that law-abiding citizens shall not be interfered with."[65] The officer responsible for Cork County, one of the more violent during the Troubles, similarly believed the restrictions led to the insurgents and neutrals alike "behaving themselves because the disloyal element are fully aware that if they don't, further restrictions will be imposed which will mean pecuniary loss, and touching their pockets is the most effect form of punishment for the many lawless acts committed in this West Riding."[66] The rationale behind these thoughts had two primary facets: collective punishments were within the parameters of minimum force because no shots had to be fired to gain compliance, and the punishments were not intentionally humiliating or offensive to religious sensibilities. Those living in special military areas of course petitioned the government to remove the restrictions on the grounds that violence had indeed decreased, and the people were suffering financially.[67]

This message was driven home in the signature British military manual of the inter-war years. Sir Charles Gwynn is generally credited with institutionalizing minimum force and defining its use for the generation of officers, in a practical if not in a legal

---

[65] Sheehan, *A Hard Local War*, 92.

[66] Ibid., 93.

[67] Ibid.

sense. Gwynn's *Imperial Policing* which became a staff college staple soon after its publication in 1934, provided a narrative of several uprisings to explain their success or failure based on Gwynn's four principles (civil military cooperation, minimum force, firm and timely action, civil authorities establish policy) —especially minimum force— of countering subversion and revolt.[68] The application of minimum force, according to Sir Charles, was limited to imperial policing—that is, political protest movements, which became more common in the inter-war years as nationalism took hold among Britain's imperial subjects. "Small wars," a term made current by Major General C.E. Callwell as the title of his classic 1896 manual of how to fight resistance to imperial expansion and rule, constituted a different category, in Gwynn's view. In small wars like those of colonial conquest prior to World War I, Gwynn believed, no limits on the use of force existed.[69] In aid to the civil power, in which the government has not lost total control, but would were it not for the army and police, he explains that crown forces "must be guided in most cases by certain general principles rather than by definite orders, and, as a rule, they must have to decide what is the minimum force they must employ rather than how they can develop the maximum power at their disposal."[70] Post-hoc impositions of differing perceptions regarding what constitutes minimum force should be irrelevant; soldiers should be allowed to exercise their judgment without fear of punishment like that which happened to Dyer. The officer or non-commissioned officer at the scene had the sole responsibility for interpreting the situation and determining the appropriate use of lethal force if civil authorities could not provide immediate supervision. The principles to guide these officers are dictated by experience, and Gwynn warns that this tradition of "broadcasting experience" has two divergent paths: following the examples of close cooperation with civil authorities and the use of minimum force will lead to success, while the "traditions of the Indian Mutiny" of 1857 for example in which massacres of the indigenous population by British troops were widespread, would lead to excesses that

[68] Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 13–15.

[69] Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 3.

[70] Ibid., 6.

may damn officers legally and ethically.[71] Gwynn argued that tradition and earlier experiences passed down were important guides to imperial policing, a version of organizational learning equal, if not more important guides to the behavior of British counterinsurgents, which became obvious during the Troubles (1919–21) war and the inter-war insurgencies in Palestine. But while Gwynn made the distinction between small wars and imperial policing, many British soldiers saw it as a hair splitting exercise. For them, political protest was simply a form of rebellion that escalated to open revolt.

D. MINIMUM FORCE LESSONS FROM THE INTERWAR GENERATION TO THE NEXT

The seeds for the modern understanding of an absolute minimum force were planted in *Imperial Policing*, but Gwynn's explanation of the concept is confusing, incomplete, and ultimately denies civilian control of the military and the whole notion of "military aid to the civil power," allegedly a cornerstone principle of British counterinsurgency. Contrary to Thornton's arguments about the origins of minimum force, Gwynn states that his goal is the creation of a new tradition of minimum force, as the military literature of the time focused on "how an army can develop the maximum of power with the resources at its disposal under varying circumstances."[72] Prior to *Imperial Policing*, Callwell's *Small Wars* dominated the thinking about conflicts that failed to achieve the level of conventional conflict between two relatively equal powers, and it called for the destruction of enemy property and other sources of support—including that of the population—to force surrender, as the Boer War illustrated. Defining minimum force, Gwynn states:

> Another equally important principle is that the amount of military force employed must be the minimum the situation demands. It should always be borne in mind that the hostile forces are fellow citizens of the Empire, and that the military object is to re-establish control of the civil power and secure its acceptance without an aftermath of bitterness. When armed hostile bodies are encountered troops can without hesitation use every method and weapon necessary for their defeat or capture, but drastic punitive measures to induce surrender, or in the nature of reprisals, may

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid., 7.

> awaken sympathy with the revolutionaries, and in the long run militate against the re-establishment of normal conditions, although at the moment they may prove effective.[73]

Gwynn explains that minimum force is relative to the circumstances—not the vague imposition of an absolute minimum degree of force that the press, some government officials, and several historians will later insist upon. For example, Gwynn's assertion that counterinsurgents may without hesitation use every method and weapons necessary for the insurgents' defeat or capture when fired upon had been discarded, at least in theory, in the post–World War II era. In his *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, French Lieutenant Colonel David Galula writes:

> A soldier fired upon in conventional war who does not fire back with every available weapon would be guilty of a dereliction of his duty; the reverse would be the case in counterinsurgency warfare, where the rule is to apply the minimum of fire. "No politics" is an ingrained reaction for the conventional soldier, whose job is solely to defeat the enemy; yet in counterinsurgency warfare, the soldier's job is to help with the support of the population and in doing so, he has to engage in practical politics.[74]

As it will be shown later, subsequent writers and practitioners impose this absolute minimum degree of force in the application of certain weapon systems based on their destructive power. For instance, on the heels of Amritsar, the British government was loath to allow the use of airplanes in an offensive capacity during the final phase of the Anglo-Irish War, although they used air power extensively in Afghanistan and Mesopotamia in 1919–1920. However, the positive role of air power in both Iraq and Ireland proved that the use of a weapon with the capacity for mass destruction need not be precluded.[75] Likewise, Gwynn saw little need to ban weapon systems based on the fact that they could cause significant casualties—in fact, he promotes their use:

> Increased fire power of rifles and automatic weapons [machine guns] enables columns to be kept smaller and less encumbered with transport. Defensive detachments of all sorts can be reduced in size, releasing more

---

[73] Ibid., 14.

[74] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 66.

[75] Sheehan, *A Hard Local War*, 140–145.

> men for offensive duties and simplifying the supply question . . . . The Air Service, even when the nature of the ground and of the enemy reduce its potentialities for offensive action or for reconnaissance, removes some of the danger which arises where ground communication with detached posts are interrupted.76

The revolutionary technology of World War I was fair to use and conducive to success in counterinsurgency. The only limitation on tracked vehicles such as tanks or armored fighting vehicles Gwynn saw were imposed by the terrain and the need to maintain the element of surprise during offensive action. Similarly, he states that "prejudice exists against the employment of machine guns in dealing with internal disturbances . . . due to the fact that they have on occasion been ruthlessly used and on account of their potential destructive effects."[77] Nevertheless, their use in imperial policing is preferable as long as minimum force is not violated in actions like those of General Dyer, who succeeded in causing the unarmed crowd to try to disperse but continued to fire anyway.[78] This is not to say that unarmed rioters were not viable targets in imperial policing. In discussing the 1931 revolt in Cyprus, Gwynn concludes his analysis of that uprising, during which police fired upon civilians, by saying, "as the people made no use of firearms it was a comparatively easy matter for the troops to maintain the principle of minimum force, though it is worth noting how immediately effective was the result of the very few rounds that were fired to disperse dangerous rioters."[79] On September 24, 1929, the Cairo Brigade sent one battalion of infantry to Palestine to quell disorder there. Upon arrival, the troops used a "few bursts of Lewis [machine] gun fire" to deter looters, causing several casualties. However, Gwynn notes that "the troops had to use their weapons freely when intervening, yet the principle of using the minimum amount of force necessary was adhered to, and stringent orders for strict control of fire were in force."[80] In effect, minimum force was originally understood to be a relative minimum degree of force, which could be observed regardless of the destructive capability of the weapon

---

[76] Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 28–29.

[77] Ibid., 31.

[78] Ibid., 29–31.

[79] Ibid., 363.

[80] Ibid., 231, 251.

system or whether the targets were armed. While the civil authority was responsible for providing guidance regarding the use of force, the senior soldier or policeman determined what constituted minimum force for each event, and this interpretation could vary from officer to officer, or within the same officer at different times of day. Minimum force did not apply to armed insurgents, however, who were not subject to the standards of conventional warfare at the time and therefore fell outside of the laws of war.

British Lieutenant colonel H.J. Simson voiced the same admonition in his 1937 book *British Rule and Rebellion*, stating the principles of rebellion vis-à-vis minimum force, cooperation with the civil authority, and the rest "were framed to deal with riot and not with sub-war," which is armed insurrection.[81] As the analysis of subsequent insurgencies will show, this understanding of minimum force would engender a desire to separate the population from the insurgents and isolate the latter so conventional force could be used without the consideration of noncombatants. Similarly, even though minimum force was part of a hearts and minds effort to gain and maintain the loyalty of the target population during counterinsurgency, punitive measures such as collective fines, curfews, movement and population controls nevertheless became part of the generic counterinsurgency formula. Today, proponents of absolute minimum force view these tools as anathema to minimum force doctrine.

Thomas Mockaitis, whose academic restatement of Sir Robert Thompson's view that the British army had established the correct minimum force calculus to make it the leader in counterinsurgency warfare doctrine, noted in 1990 that "English common law dictated that disorders had to be suppressed with minimum force. Originally confined to civil unrest in Britain, the principle gradually expanded to include all forms of unrest from riot to revolution."[82] Minimum force pertained not only to the relationship between crown forces and the insurgents, but also to the treatment of locals within the parameters of hearts and minds campaigns. Initially, however, minimum force was not a consideration within punitive measures by the military, police, and civil authorities—so long as the punishments did not humiliate citizens or insult their religious sensibilities.

[81] Simson, *British Rule and Rebellion*, 54.

[82] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 13.

Speaking on the need to extract information from the population and turn that information into intelligence, Gwynn writes,

> Outbreaks of sabotage stand on much the same footing, and, owing to the difficulty of fixing individual responsibility, it may frequently be necessary to deal with them by collective punishments. It is in these matters particularly that officers should be vested with special powers, but these must at all times be clearly defined and used with discretion . . . . Such measures as the detention of suspects, forcing the inhabitants to repair without payment damage caused by sabotage in their neighbourhood, or, at times, infliction of fines to pay for labor brought from elsewhere, are typical of reasonable measures which have often been justified . . . . On the other hand, superior authority seldom approves physical chastisement or destruction of property, except in the course of quelling actual resistance.[83]

Crown forces were instructed on the use of coercion to ensure compliance from various groups within the population. In this way, hearts and minds, as part of the British counterinsurgency formula, was not merely the benign bribery of new schools, hospitals, and other public works projects that Robert Thompson, Frank Kitson, and others have sold to the world in the face of pressure from British and international organizations, media, and government. Even in Malaya between 1948 and 1960, the signature success of British counterinsurgency, the hearts and minds campaign combined public services such as schools and utilities with a large dose of raw coercive force in the manner Charles Gwynn describes. Before an examination of the pressures which altered the popular understanding if not the practice of minimum force, examining the organizational culture, or the method of broadcasting experience, will show why the brutal methods of the army and the Royal Irish Constabulary and Palestinian Police Force came to dominate the "inside game" of British counterinsurgency throughout the wars of decolonialization.

Because soldiers and policemen, as well as practitioners turned historian, like H.J. Simson, believed the truce that ended the Troubles was an unnecessary capitulation—given the perception among crown forces that military victory was imminent toward the end of 1921—the harsh methods of special military areas, coercion, reprisals, and other collective punishments such as curfews and fines were seen as completely justified and

[83] Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 23.

acceptable practices. Toward the war's end, the IRA's flying column were effectively countered by British flying columns, IRA ambushes were proving to be more costly than before, which encouraged a preference for road-side bombs. The RIC won the vast majority of battles involving IRA attempts to overrun barracks. In effect, the IRA was losing militarily, and they knew it.[84] The horrors of the Boer War, Jillianwala Bagh, and the Irish War of Independence did not, however, significantly alter the military's and colonial police's understanding of what minimum force entailed or to whom it applied and when. Civil authorities and security forces would continue to disagree on this matter throughout the decolonialization period. The army turned to collective punishments and an increased degree of coercion and force. The perception that these methods worked on the tactical level and hence translated into strategic victory would lead to their widespread use later in Palestine, Malaya, Kenya, Aden, and elsewhere. Failure could be explained away as a "stab-in- the-back" by civilian authorities and soft populations at home. The methods of the Black and Tans with the RIC, as well as ADRIC, would later become a first resort for colonial police in the absence of strategic planning by civil authorities—as was the case during the Troubles—during the inter-war years and the Cold War. However, the British combatants would attempt to highlight the incentives of schools and clinics, coupled with low-intensity contact, as the model of counterinsurgency while obfuscating the coercive practices or, as Mockaitis does, portray such instances are exceptions rather than the norm.

[84] Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, 144.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

III. PALESTINE BECOMES THE NEW IRELAND

A. INTRODUCTION

The doctrinal pillars of British counterinsurgency as advertised are minimum force, "aid to the civil power" which essentially meant police primacy in operations with the army in support, and maintaining operations within a legal framework. Chapter II argued that, since its inception in the aftermath of World War I as the British army transitioned from small wars to colonial policing, minimum force was a fluid concept whose parameters were left largely to the interpretation of officers on the ground. Chapter IV will contend that concept of "legality" as a guide to lawful actions and an operational and tactical constraint on British counterinsurgency operations in the post–World War II era was elastic to the point of being functionally meaningless. This chapter will continue the examination of "aid to the civil power" as explored initially in the discussion of the Troubles. As witnessed in Ireland between 1919 and 1921, the police as representatives of the civil power were a militarized force that was too often poorly trained, ill disciplined, uninformed because it was largely clueless when it came to local languages and cultures, and unaccountable. It had no doctrine of colonial policing as such, but merely passed on practices and habits, many informed by racist attitudes, from Ireland via the Palestine Gendarmerie/Police to the British colonial dominions.

B. PALESTINE 1929

Since the late 19th century, the paramilitary RIC, and its successor from 1922 the Royal Ulster Constabulary, rather than the English "Bobby" that answered to local authorities and exemplified community policing, became both the organizational model and a source of recruits and sometimes training for colonial police forces. The role of the RIC was to habituate Irish Catholics to respect English law with sword and rifle. This model translated naturally to the colonies where the police were to protect expatriates and their property and enforce British rule over peoples of color. "The reality of [empire] policing was far removed from the image of the bobby on the beat," concludes British

historian of the police, Georgina Sinclair.[85] The road to colonial policing in terms of doctrine and experience ran from Ireland through Palestine, which became a British mandate at the close of World War I. To relieve the army from the chore of policing this new imperial acquisition, Winston Churchill created a British section of the Palestine Gendarmerie. The disbanded RIC was an obvious source of recruits. In fact, following the war in Ireland, the former RIC officers were encouraged to join the newly formed Palestine Gendarmerie that became the Palestine Police in 1926. Georgina Sinclair, in *At the End of the Line*, writes of a large recruiting drive among the RUC that practically filled the Palestine Gendarmerie's initial personnel requirements:

> Recruitment for the new unit was opened in London as well as Dublin, and some 700 men came forward. Brigadier General Angus MacNeill was placed in charge of taking the newly-formed corps to Palestine, following initial training at Fort Tregantle in Britain. MacNeill had been authorized to recruit 49 officers and 701 other ranks. His second-in-command was Major G. Foley, who had joined the RIC in 1911 and had been responsible largely for training in County Mayo. By March 22 [1922], the British Section of the Palestine Gendarmerie was made up almost exclusively of former regular and auxiliary RIC members.[86]

Consequently, County Mayo, where Major Foley was stationed before becoming the second in command of the Palestinian Gendarmerie, saw the second highest recorded levels of violence by police and soldiers during the war, and it contained the second highest number of Black and Tans, as well as ADRIC policemen.[87] Offenses by police included a large-scale reprisal in the spirit of Balbriggan, execution of prisoners, extra-judicial killings (some of which were covered up by fellow police), and a policy of frequent small-scale reprisals encouraged by the county inspector, who believed such methods were the key to gaining the population's compliance and defeating the IRA.[88] The RUC ranks recruited for service in Palestine were generally either complicit in such

[85] Sinclair, *The End of the Line*, 11, 13.

[86] Ibid., 20.

[87] Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, 18–23, 26.

[88] Ibid.,

behavior or had utilized such methods themselves, as shown previously. The British government essentially exported Black-and-Tannery, not minimum force doctrine, to Palestine.

Imperial policing and, later, counterinsurgency in Palestine was an effort that no amount of force—minimum or otherwise—could influence. According to conventional counterinsurgency wisdom, because minimum force is always a putative part of the larger hearts and minds campaign—whether it consists of coercion, political concession, public services, or a combination thereof—the degree of force used can only alienate the population if there is a chance that the target audience is politically pliable, or "biddable" in current COIN jargon. The belligerents in Palestine—Zionist and Arab—were not willing to accept each other from the outset of the Mandate in 1922. This is because the 1917 Balfour Declaration had designated Palestine as "a national home for the Jewish people" in fulfillment of Zionist aspirations. The local Arab population who had not been consulted naturally began to object when European Jews began to arrive in ever larger numbers to buy land and establish communal farms known as kibbutzim. The problem for the British is that they could not craft a political compromise acceptable to both sides. So, in the absence of a viable policy, they were forced to fall back on coercive tactics, first against one side, then against the other.

Mockaitis characterizes the inter-war period as one during which

> . . . every soldier had the concept of minimum force drilled into him. The British generally did not tolerate anyone taking the law into his own hands. Isolated incidents of ill treatment no doubt occurred, but these were never the result of official policy. Allegations of misconduct were usually investigated and abuses stopped. The lessons of Ireland and Amritsar were that at any given time a soldier might be asked to account for his actions.[89]

He is being naïve. Minimum force defined by Sir Charles Gwynn allowed rioters and small mobs to be dispersed with the least amount of lethal force required. Of course, the determination of "least amount" was left up to the discretion of the enforcer. The problem for colonial policing in the inter-war period was that colonial governments, their armies

[89] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 40.

and police forces made no distinction between political protest, strikes, and armed rebellion, as Amritsar demonstrated. On the contrary, each was seen as part of a continuum of escalating violence that challenged the legitimacy of colonial rule.

A decade of smoldering Arab discontent with British policy in Palestine erupted into serious violence in 1929. While Colonial Office officials and Sir Herbert Dowbiggin, summoned to Palestine to oversee police reforms, desired a civil police force that would focus on crime prevention without the use of firearms, the nature and character of the Palestinian conflict would obviate any such transition to an English police model.[90] Jews and Arabs fought for the use of religious sites considered holy to each in mid-August. The more numerous Arabs under the leadership of Haj Mohammed Effendi Amin el-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, began attacking the small number of Jewish enclaves. Arabs who ventured into Jewish neighborhoods might be murdered. While the violence was severe, it was inter-communal and not directed at the government. The duties of security forces, then, consisted of "rescue and protection work."[91] To that end, the reinforced police and soldiers were expected to react with minimum force, unless confronted by armed bands. Crown forces, however, did not comply with that requirement in many cases. On 26 August, as reinforcements were deploying from various parts of Palestine to the more troubled areas, a platoon of royal marines under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Petre responded to rumors of Arabs threatening to loot the village of Khulde.[92] The Arab mobs had been attacking Jews throughout the day with edged and blunt weapons, yet the platoon responded with ostensibly unwarranted lethal force, killing 25 and wounding 30 or more attackers who had surrounded a house containing 30 Jews seeking refuge.[93] The next day, LTC Petre issued a warning based on intelligence stating Bedouins intended to attack Katra. After evacuating nearby populated areas, he warned neighboring villages that anyone seen moving through the cleared areas

[90] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 106.

[91] Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, 237.

[92] Ibid., 239.

[93] Ibid.

would be "treated as hostile."[94] This was the first free-fire area established in Palestine, meaning security forces could fire upon anyone entering the area without warning, regardless of whether they were armed or not. Despite separate occasions during which soldiers and police fired on Arabs attempting to escape a cordon and using a Lewis machine gun to inflict casualties on unarmed looters, Sir Charles' analysis of the brief conflict concludes with praise of the soldiers and marines for adhering to the new principles of aid to the civil power:

> Although on occasions the troops had to use their weapons freely when intervening, yet the principle of using the minimum amount of force necessary was adhered to, and stringent orders for strict control of fire were in force. In every case troops when possible acted in close co-operations with the police, especially when raids were carried out to effect arrests. Troops surrounded the villages and prevented, by fire when necessary, wanted men from escaping, but the actual arrests were carried out by police.[95]

According to Gwynn's own definition of minimum force, one could argue that security forces did not perform in accordance with that principle—and certainly not by absolute minimum force advocates like Galula and Mockaitis. Because the riots did not degenerate into armed insurrection, the full panoply of methods used in Ireland were not implemented. This would begin to change with the Arab Revolt of 1936 and more so during the Jewish insurrection of 1946–47.

C. PALESTINE 1936: THE ARAB REVOLT.

The conditions that led to the 1929 uprising had not changed by 1936. Jews and Arabs had incompatible goals that the British government appeared unable to reconcile. Committed to the Balfour Declaration, Whitehall did not want to be seen as caving to Arab demands., which would be seen as buckling under the threat and use of force—a negotiation from a position of weakness that the government would not accept., In *Military Lessons on the Rebellion in Palestine*, the Palestine General Staff concluded that concessions to the Palestinians, "however disguised, …would of course have been in

[94] Ibid., 240.

[95] Ibid., 231, 244–5, 251.

effect a submission to force, and was obviously inacceptable on that account."[96] As it would become habit, the British required the insurgents to be defeated prior to political concessions. Vacillation over the implementation of martial law—advocated by the military and refused by civil authority because the military could produce no clear plan of implementation—often inhibited strategic progress, regardless of perceived political impossibilities vis-à-vis capitulation on immigration numbers or self-rule. H.J. Simson points out in *British Rule and Rebellion* that civil authorities in Palestine were slow to acknowledge failure early and insisted on a defensive posture that spread forces thinly across the Mandate, thereby preventing offensive operations against the insurgents.[97] Although the British problems in Palestine were political, the military wanted to use overwhelming force in offensive operations, as was custom in the face of armed revolt. Charles Townshend provides an example of a fairly standard – at least in the RAF—military reaction regarding the security forces' predilection for resorting to coercion to subdue the population and the insurgents: Air Commodore Authur Harris genuinely believed that peace could be imposed by aerial bombing, insisting that, "one 250lbs or 500lbs bomb in each village that speak out of turn within a few minutes or hours of having so spoken, for example; or the complete blotting out of a few selected haunts, *pour encourager les autres*."[98] Mockaitis seems to ignore these military demands for excessive force and instead claims that minimum force doctrine held sway during the Arab Revolt. In addition to the suppression of unruly mobs on the street, minimum force was now redefined to include exemplary force (cordon and search operations, checkpoints, etc.) and direct fire engagements with armed insurgents.[99] Mockaitis admits the military and police in Palestine used cordon and search operations as a punitive measure, "designed to inconvenience the population to such a degree that they would be disinclined to aid the rebels."[100] Firing on the unarmed civilians attempting to escape the

---

[96] Charles Townshend, "The Defense of Palestine: Insurrection and Public Security, 1936–1939," *The English Historical Review* 103, no. 409 (October, 1988): 925–926.

[97] Simson, *British Rule and Rebellion*, 104–105.

[98] Townshend, "The Defense of Palestine," 934.

[99] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 33

[100] Ibid.

cordon did occur, although not nearly as frequently as such deaths were during 1919–1921 in Ireland, largely because "shot while trying to escape" was too often a euphemism for summary execution.[101] Control of the civilian population was attempted through half-measures in 1936, as no movement controls existed for troubled areas, and no arms reduction measures were enforced at the border.[102] Weapons and enemy riflemen flowed freely into Palestine from Lebanon and Syria. The army and police fell back on tactics that had been used in Ireland. Crown forces conducted mass arrests based on census information rather than accurate intelligence which they did not possess, oftentimes detaining innocent people whose only "crime" was that they lacked a plausible excuse for being in town. Military courts issued the death penalty for those found guilty of arms possession and houses were demolished and fines levied on entire villages.[103] These large scale operations and punishments drove the enemy to ground, after which point the military and police would conduct small unit operations, such as Captain Orde Wingate's "Special Night Squads," composed of an officer and approximately 30 soldiers and volunteers recruited from the Jewish settler community who would conduct counter-ambushes and other small scale operations similar to the British Flying Columns created at the end of the Irish Troubles, or intimidation operations that more resembled the behavior of the Auxies.[104]

The Palestinian Police were in the forefront of these minimum force reprisals. Matthew Hughes writes of a group of police, only months into the actual armed insurgency, which terrorized Jerusalem using only truncheons, despite possessing firearms. The group led by the Assistant Superintendent Alan Sigrist would attack Arabs indiscriminately, breaking bones and leaving the victims in bloody heaps on the street.[105] Sigrist and his men would destroy the facades of office buildings and beat the staff

---

[101] Ibid.

[102] Simson, *British Rule and Rebellion*, 114.

[103] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 90–91, 168.

[104] Townshend, "The Defense of Palestine, 935; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 146.

[105] Matthew Hughes, "Assassination in Jerusalem: Bahjat Abu Gharbiya and Sami Al-Ansari's Shooting of British Assistant Superintendent Alan Sigrist 12th June 1936," http://www.jerusalemquarterly.org/images/ArticlesPdf/44_Assassination%20in%20jerusalem.pdf, 9–10.

members therein, but his actions caused the people in the city to clear the streets when they heard the sound of his vehicle approaching.[106] These larger scale attacks by the police were reprisals resulting from enemy actions, such as the murder of a Constable Bird which was answered by Sigrist's destruction of a local newspaper office and the subsequent horrific beating of the people inside.[107] The Assistant Superintendent was not stopped by the civil authorities, despite protestations by the people. Hughes writes, "There were so many local protests about Sigrist that the leaders of the *Istiqlal* (Independence) Party met J. H. Hall, the Mandate Chief Secretary, to make a complaint about the goings-on but there was no response to these petitions so Jerusalemites 'condemned' and 'sentenced' Sigrist to death . . . ."[108] An assassin's bullet ended the policeman's terrorism after the civil authorities would do nothing to curtail Sigrist's activities, even after direct appeals to the Chief Secretary. At no discernible point did the military believe that absolute minimum force was necessary or warranted while in contact with armed insurgents—or in dealing with the general population who were assumed to be hiding and supplying the guerrillas. The *Military Lessons on the Rebellion in Palestine* mentions the benefits of coercion and the futility of maintaining the status quo vis-à-vis public services and daily patterns of life:

> One of the ways of [suppressing the insurgent] is to deny him the means of conducting his national life and, though it will seldom be politic to apply this in full to rebellion, it must surely be illogical to use armed force to *maintain* the national life, which of course includes that of the entire rebel population. In fact a partial paralysis of life has certain advantages . . . . It will of course injure innocent people with the guilty, but it will remove that apathy which prevailed among so many of the population in Palestine. In rebellion there can be no neutrals.[109]

The goal, obviously, was the cow the population rather than win it over through displays of minimum force. The British military and police, however, remained convinced that the tactics and methods from Ireland and now Palestine were the correct

---

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 10

[109] Townshend, "The Defense of Palestine," 938.

ones likely to get results against colonial people. Any failure in Palestine from 1936 to 1939 was, in their view, the fault of the civil authorities who failed to relinquish control to the military—however politically unpalatable it may have been.[110] Facing an enemy that would not be placated short of a political settlement, the resort to compelling force was perceived as the only tool left to the crown forces.

During the Arab Revolt, a divergence of the civil authority as a tempering agent versus the military's desire for greater autonomy in operations and the use of force emerged. In 1937, H. J. Simson accused the civil authorities of executing a policy of "extreme moderation," which "naturally entailed the imposition of restrictions on the action of both police and troops."[111] In his view—the one to which officers were exposed in staff college—the civil authorities often viewed the insurgents and counterinsurgents dispassionately: "The civil power, therefore, is not at one with its police and armed forces. It just regards them as one dog in a dog-fight, no better, and perhaps no worse, than the other dog, just a dog."[112] As a symptom of this conflict in civil-military relations, the police, especially, were undergoing an externally imposed identity crisis, of sorts. As previously mentioned, Sir Herbert Dowbiggin had been trying to instill the civil, metropolitan policing model on the Palestine Police Force prior to 1936. His goal was to turn the PPF into a largely unarmed crime-prevention organization similar to the Metropolitan Police in England—with the exception of a reserve capacity to conduct security operations in tandem. After the strike in 1936 and the subsequent riots, however, the circumstances called for a halt and reversal in the transition to a civil police force in lieu of the standard RIC-based colonial model. Lord Peel, in the course of heading the commission on the Palestinian revolt, brought Sir Charles Tegart to Palestine to serve as an unofficial police advisor.[113] Tegart initially agreed with Dowbiggin that the Palestine police should adopt the civil policing model. However, the nature and character of the Arab Revolt caused him to change his mind; his final report on the police

[110] Simson, *British Rule and Rebellion*, 104.

[111] Ibid., 226–227.

[112] Ibid., 80.

[113] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 107.

advocated a continued militarization of the entire police force and the creation of a mounted division.[114] This latter recommendation would manifest in 1944 as the Palestine Police Mobile Force (PPMF), which served as a military-style mobile strike force in the style of the Auxiliaries and the Special Night Squads. In lieu of batons and sometimes revolvers, characteristic of civil policing, new recruits—many of whom were World War II veterans who were placed in senior positions against the will of the Colonial Office—were trained on the use of Bren guns, Lewis guns, Thompson submachine guns, standard rifles sited for 500 yard targets, and organized in military companies using army drills.[115] Georgina Sinclair, in *At the End of the Line*, explains how the Palestine Police Force slowly became the reincarnation of the RIC, as a result of this military training:

> Thus, moves to civilianise aspects of the Palestine Police were pushed aside by the need for a semi-militarised police force that could operate effectively in a colonial war. Thus, the need for colonial-style police training remained paramount, and there is no better example of this than the Palestine police. Its influence with regard to training and paramilitary policing duties was carried throughout the Empire.[116]

In effect, the traditions of the RIC (with Black and Tans) and ADRIC were perpetuated, but this time with better military training and equipment.

[114] Ibid., 107–108.

[115] Ibid., 22–23.

[116] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 110.

IV. THE SLIDING SCALE OF "MINIMUM FORCE"

A. INTRODUCTION

The erosion of European empires accelerated after World War II, as indigenous nationalism gained momentum. In *Winning Hearts and Minds*, Susan Carruthers wrote that Britain's hold over its possessions disintegrated "both morally and materially…In moral terms, 'Empire' increasingly appeared to be an idea whose time had expired—the war having left the two most vocally 'anti-imperialist' powers [the United States and the USSR] pre-eminent."[117] Apart from imperial nostalgia or the power of colonial lobbies, the fact that Britain needed the colonies that had provided materiel during the war to aid in its post-war recovery, made London reluctant to cut loose from her colonial empire without a struggle.[118] The fear of communist expansion resumed after the Nazi government's defeat provided an excellent justification for strengthening the grip of the homeland in the colonies, especially during and after the communist insurgency in Malaya, which began in 1948 as Britain gave up the fight for Palestine. Anti-communism became a popular trope in post-war colonialist circles—in 1950, the Colonial Secretary, James Griffiths argued that the Malayan Emergency was part of a greater global communist threat disguised as nationalism, while the Chief of Staff for Middle East Land Forces saw the Kikuyu insurgency in Kenya, which erupted in 1952 principally over land rights as "excellent material for the Communist inspired agitators who are now trying to work up discontent and to promote strikes."[119]

The global threat that communism allegedly posed for the empire might suggest that minimum force had become obsolete as a doctrine for imperial survival, an insufficient response to a ruthless foe directed in the eyes of many by the Kremlin. Before British Prime Minister Harold Macmillian's "Winds of Change" speech delivered to the South African Parliament in February 1960, many British colonialists conceded that while colonial independence was on the cards, it remained in the very distant future. One

---

[117] Susan Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 9.

[118] Ibid.

[119] French, *The British Way*, 42.

of the ironies of colonial counterinsurgencies, however, was that their brutality speeded up the move toward independence, both in the colonies and in London. Whitehall began to shift its priorities from retaining the colonies to ensuring the installation of indigenous governments that would resist communist expansion following the withdrawal of British forces. In the context of the Cold War obsession with communism, it proved a delicate maneuver in places like Malaya, Kenya, Rhodesia and South Africa, colonies that had large white settler populations who maintained influential contacts in Westminster and upon whom British army and police forces relied to maintain order. Britain's colonial administrators, soldiers and policemen used to living in a nineteenth century world of racial hierarchy and respect were left to deal with increasingly vocal and violent indigenous demands for redress of political and economic inequalities, demands backed increasingly by international public opinion, but which they attributed to communist machinations, when in fact, with the exception of Malaya, this was not the case. This put the doctrine of minimum force under considerable stress at the very moment when the Geneva Conventions and the European Convention on Human Rights, in the shadow of the Holocaust, were attempting to codify the treatment of civilians in war zones.

Britain's civilian leadership insisted, at least in public, that its soldiers and police respect human rights while dealing with insurgents and the populations in which they acted. In practice, however, while counterinsurgents claimed to use minimum-force doctrine, in fact they ignored it when the prying eyes of national civil authorities and the media were absent. Proclamations of adherence to minimum force as part of a greater hearts and minds strategy were a façade used to placate the concerns of human-rights advocates. "Population-centric" counterinsurgency tactics were promoted as a way to deal humanely with rebellions against colonial authority. In the aftermath of the Holocaust and the murder of literally millions of Soviet POWs by the Nazis, the growing concern about the treatment of both combatants and noncombatants, regardless of whether armed conflicts were interstate or intrastate, was quickly manifested in international law previously mentioned. Naturally, as one of the Allied powers, Britain had to behave—or pretend to behave—according to the new morality in the conduct of

war. Accordingly, Colonial Secretary Sir Arthur Creech-Jones, wanted "to ensure that notions of *Britishness* were inculcated to leave an acceptable face of imperialism at independence."[120]

International humanitarian law during this time forbade many of the coercive methods popular among colonial soldiers, police, and governments. However, the British government developed a strategy for avoiding the constraints posed by such laws. David French writes in *The British Way of Counterinsurgency* that the strategy had three components. First, they tried to prolong discussions on laws proposed to curtain violence in warfare. Then, when that effort was exhausted, they raised legal objections in order to delay ratification, which meant that the 1949 Geneva Convention was only ratified in 1957.[121] The British objected specifically to Article 68 of the Convention, which forbade executing civilians by criminal court. They also argued that several other provisions would limit their ability to treat insurgents and their supporters as rebels rather than as noncombatants.[122] The second legal dodge involved finding loopholes in the laws that would permit certain behaviors, even if the spirit of the law were violated. David French provides the example,

> When the Kenya government wanted to incarcerate over 70,000 [Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru] in work-camps where they could pursue a policy of "redemption through work," the Colonial Office warned that they might be in breech of the 1930 ILO Conventions against Forced Labor and ECHR. But a sharp-eyed lawyer spotted two legal loop-holes. Article 2 of the ILO convention and Article 4 of the ECHR permitted governments to extract forced labor from its citizens in cases of emergency.[123]

The final component of the avoidance strategy consisted of merely implementing the sections of law they found acceptable, and objecting to sections they found unacceptable. "Article 15 of the ECHR permitted derogation from the obligations accepted under the Convention during a public emergency, provided the government

---

[120] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 56.

[121] French, *The British Way*, 230.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

concerned gave formal written notice of Derogation . . . ."[124] As the conduct of the subsequent counterinsurgencies will show, neither the Geneva Conventions nor the ECHR impeded the use of force or collective punishments. However, the growing pressure to abide by the international laws would lead, in part, to the declarations of "winning hearts and minds," especially in Malaya, as will be discussed later.

B. PALESTINE

As Britain's position in Palestine deteriorated from 1946, they moved further away from minimum force doctrine and obtaining the popular support of the people. To be fair, no strategy was likely to work in a place where Zionist settlers, known as the Yishuv, and Arabs had incompatible political goals that would seem to brook no compromise. A political solution seemed out of the question, especially as a condition for curtailing the "Arab Revolt" of 1936–1939, the British had promised to curtail Jewish immigration into Palestine. The problem, of course, was that the Holocaust not only created great international sympathy for the surviving Jewish population. It also increased the demand for Holocaust survivors to immigrate to Palestine, a demand supported by Britain's major ally, the United States. Therefore, the traditional divide-and-rule counterinsurgency strategy – to pit one group against another – was off the table because Britain was unable in the aftermath of the Holocaust to enlist the Arabs as allies in an anti-Zionist counterinsurgency. In these conditions, two small groups of Zionist terrorists were able to provoke the British army and police who into overacting against the Yishuv. This collapse of minimum force caused the Zionist population to back wholeheartedly the departure of Britain from Palestine. The result was a catastrophic failure of British counterinsurgency doctrine.

Gwynn's warning that the default position of the military and police toward violence was aggravated by the forces' experience in Palestine. David French provides examples of the military's belief in the efficacy of brutality in counterinsurgencies, just as they did in Ireland and the earlier revolts in Palestine. A letter by LTC J.M.H Hackett,

[124] Ibid., 230–231.

commander of an airborne regiment in Palestine in 1948, explains the perceived necessity of harsh treatment of the Zionist population:

> No matter what the politicians say, every soldier who served in Palestine during the recent trouble knows, unfortunately by bitter experience, that when the security forces have to deal with a thoroughly non-cooperative, unscrupulous, dishonest and utterly immoral civil population such as the Jewish Community in Palestine, who systematically and continually hide and refuse to give up for justice the perpetrators of murderous outrages, reprisals are the only effective weapon to employ, saving time, money and unnecessary bloodshed.[125]

In keeping with the spirit of Hackett's sentiments and the unalloyed anti-Semitism they reveal, the British extended a policy hitherto deployed exclusively against Arabs of destroying the property—houses and a citrus grove—from which units were attacked.[126] The methodology of reprisals had not evolved since the Irish Troubles (or the Boer War, for that matter), although the threshold of provocation had risen with the presence of the press. Therefore, reprisals may have been less frequent than applied elsewhere, if not less destructive. The Palestine Police Force retained some brutal traditions from ADRIC, just as the military took responsibility for meting out justice. In fact, David French depicts British soldiers and police in Palestine as trying their best to avoid minimum force constraints:

> In November 1946 members of the [Palestine Police]left nine people in hospital when they smashed Jewish cafes and a dairy in reprisal for the deaths of three of their comrades. By early 1947 parts of the army and police were locked into a cycle of reprisals and unofficial counter-reprisals. In February 1947, following the sentence of death passed on one of their members, Dov Gruner, the Irgun attacks the HQ of 1/Parachute Regiment and in separate operations blew up two jeeps. "The Airborne reaction to this followed five days later, when some 65 men from Tel Aviv were taken to Sarona camp and made to run the gauntlet while being beaten with sticks." In April two British policemen were shot in Jerusalem. The same night two Jewish youths claimed they had been arrested and beaten by plain-clothes policemen. The hanging of two British sergeants by the Irgun on 31 July 1947 sparked more reprisals. In Tel Aviv on the night of 31 July parties of soldiers, some in civilian

[125] French, *The British Way, 1945–1967*, 67.

[126] Ibid.

> clothes, armed with sub-machine guns and batons, assaulted people, smashed shop windows, and stole valuables. In a separate incident three armoured cars appeared and fired in all directions, and in another incident five soldiers in the Hartikva quarter of Tel Aviv fired guns and threw a bomb into a cinema.[127]

The list goes on. Administratively, the local civil authorities did little to deter security forces from fighting the counterinsurgency as they saw fit. The General Staff in 1946 provided the rationale for coercive force in a brief to the Palestinian Secretary of State: "It is inevitable that in the course of such action certain law abiding Jewish citizens may be molested, but it may serve to bring home to them the fact that terrorism does not pay and that the community itself should give practical effect to their denunciation of terrorism."[128] The doctrine of LTC Hackett prevailed over that of minimum force, and the rationale for coercion in Palestine by the General Staff would be replicated in Malaya and Kenya by simply replacing "Jewish" with "Chinese" or "Kikuyu," as it will be shown later. The difference was that neither the Chinese in Malaya nor the Kikuyu had strong international backing and sympathy as did the Zionists. As mentioned previously, however, Colonial Office efforts to minimize force against noncombatants and recreate the police in the image of Bobbies had failed, as the security situation demanded increased mobility and lethality. The Palestine Police Mobile Force [PPMF] filled the void. The police largely welcomed the change, because initially they felt poorly equipped given that they were expected to serve in a military capacity. Police memoirs from the 1946–1948 show a perception that police were universally hated by both sides in the conflict, and "the primitive riot equipment" that "consisted of a metal shield the size of a dustbin lid" coupled with "steel helmets and truncheons" were woefully inadequate to repel the mobs.[129] Conversely, the eight companies of the PPMF included "50 2-pounder guns, 100 smoke dischargers, 64 2-inch mortars, 50 3-inch Brownings and 132 light machine guns."[130] David Cesarani described the PPMF as "a mailed fist to use against

---

[127] French, *The British Way*, 148.

[128] Ibid., 65.

[129] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 109.

[130] Ibid., 112.

the terrorists."[131] Later, Malayan police, as well as those in Kenya and Cyprus, would create near-exact models of the PPMF for use in those subsequent insurgencies. Desires for a civil police model exercising minimum force were trumped by the realities of the Palestinian insurgency. Overwhelming force served when minimum force was perceived by the security forces as insufficient, despite protestations from civil authorities who understood the insurgencies only abstractly from afar. The colonial governors likewise resisted the imposition of a civil policing model by the Colonial Secretary, Sir Arthur Creech-Jones, who wanted to implement the same model that was advocated and subsequently abandoned by Dowbiggin in the 1930s. Georgina Sinclair explains that, in 1948, Sir Arthur "sent a circular letter to each colonial government, discussing potential methods of dealing with civil disturbances. He explained that that . . . the police should employ only minimal force and that firearms should be resorted to only in extreme circumstances."[132] This suggestion ran counter to standard practice and the requirements of the security situation. The governors felt the use of firearms in all operations was in keeping with minimum force requirements, and reports of the character of colonial violence (primarily from his Commissioner of Police, Sir Colonel Arthur Young) caused Creech-Jones settle on a dual-purpose (civil and military) policing model.[133] The Commander in Chief of the Middle East also petitioned the government to allow for the use of weapons with highly destructive capabilities. Given the precision of modern weapons, he asked if "they might be allowed to employ aerial bombs, naval gunfire, mortars and artillery to quell serious disturbances" outside of politically sensitive areas "such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth."[134] The Cabinet naturally denied the request, but the example shows the dichotomy between the approaches of civil authorities, who were concerned with the international media attention—as well as the

[131] David Cesarani, *Major Farran's Hat* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2009), 27.

[132] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 68.

[133] Ibid., 68–69.

[134] French, *The British Way*, 83.

United Nations' inquiries—in Palestine and perceptions of British counterinsurgency, and the military's senior leaders who were more concerned about victory through the use of overwhelming force.

Aware of the international attention, Jewish groups in Palestine lodged multiple complaints of military and police brutality. However, without substantiated evidence of these crimes—which included indiscriminate shooting in a village, committing "medieval torture" on detainees, and denying medical treatment of wounds to detainees—the allegations could merely be propaganda.[135] David French caveats the potentially propaganda-driven allegations with the belief that "there is sufficient independent testimony to suggest that there was a substratum of truth underpinning some of [the allegations of brutality]," mostly from Christian groups like the Red Cross.[136] The most prominent instance of security forces acting outside of the loose restraints of the law was the employment of undercover units later called "death squads," "snatch squads," "flying squads," and "pseudo-gangs,"[137] which became institutionalized in British counterinsurgency tactics. When the Colonial Office appointed Colonel William Nichol Gray to replace the commander of the PPMF in 1945, he decided to use small-unit tactics to supplement the large-scale cordon and search operations, some of which were collective punishments (notably following the King David Hotel bombing of 22 July, 1946) that Mockaitis describes as fine examples of minimum force—insofar as thousands were detained indefinitely with only 20 casualties.[138] Colonel Gray wanted to model these special forces in Palestine after SAS, at least tactically. In keeping with this goal, Sir James Bernard Fergusson (who knew Orde Wingate and his use of "Special Night Squads" from the Arab Revolt) was brought on to create and command the second generation of Special Night Squads.[139] One of Fergusson's squad leaders, Major Roy Farran, was famously acquitted in an October of 1947 court-martial for the kidnapping

[135] Ibid., 141.

[136] Ibid., 172.

[137] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 114; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 42–43;

[138] Cesarani, *Major Farran's Hat*, 27–30; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 42–43.

[139] Cesarani, *Major Farran's Hat*, 30–31, 119–121.

and murder of 16 year-old Alex Rubowitz, apprehended while putting up anti-British posters.[140] Much like General Dyer in Amritsar, Roy Farran became a mandatory political sacrifice insofar as the Palestinian government prosecuted him only after the *New York Times* and other international and local newspapers began uncovering details of the story.[141] The Colonial Office would not have approved of the squads, as Gray was picked to lead the PPMF because the alternative choice, Colonel John Hackett, was passed over for having an "Aryan" wife, a fact which "has disadvantages vis-à-vis the Jews."[142] The authorities at the strategic level still believed they could win hearts and minds—which snatch squads undermined—while those at tactical level did not. Under inquiry, Fergusson "had justified establishing the squads by arguing that the best way to defeat terrorists was by using counter-insurgents who had themselves worked as terrorists."[143] These were, in effect, second-generation Special Night Squads, this time turned against the Zionists. The Farran case suggests that they operated outside of the rule of law, under a veil of secrecy, and they were given such wide latitude in operating because the authorities felt they needed "a free hand for use against terror when all others were so closely hobbled."[144] In short, they were unaccountable, as Farran's acquittal demonstrated.

This final insurgency against the British government in Palestine was a key moment in the organizational learning of British colonial security forces because, just as happened after the Irish Troubles, the veterans of Palestine either participated in or trained the forces that would fight the insurgents in Malaya, Kenya, and Cyprus. In this way, coercion and terror would remain common practice in subsequent British counterinsurgency operations

---

[140] French, *The British Way*, 154.

[141] Cesarani, *Major Farran's Hat*, 120.

[142] Ibid., 27–28.

[143] French, *The British Way*, 154.

[144] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 114.

C. MALAYA

As the insurgency ended in Palestine in 1947, a new one began in Malaya, which came to be the primary example in the minimum force mythology—or as Mockaitis called it, a "textbook counterinsurgency campaign" in which hearts and minds was at the forefront.[145] In contrast to the notion outlined in *Imperial Policing*, minimum force henceforth meant that the employment of force of any kind became a last resort, and the weapon systems used when the circumstances required it had to cause the least amount of destruction possible. To that end, In *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, Robert Thompson (who served under both Briggs and Templer in Malaya), writes,

> The really difficult operations are those which have to be conducted in the populated disputed areas. The army's role here is to clear the main insurgent units out of the area over which the government is attempting to regain control, and to keep them out. Elimination of the units and the killing of insurgents is a secondary consideration at this stage. . . . If the selected area is sufficiently limited so that the government forces can saturate it, it is unlikely that the insurgents will seek a major battle. This is highly to be desired because the government forces do not want to have large firefights, employing heavy weapons and even aircraft, in the villages where they are attempting to regain control, as already mentioned, that type of action is liable to create more communists than it kills and makes the problem of pacification that much harder.[146]

Thompson's lesson in the use of force is reasonable on its face: overwhelming force may kill innocent people or their property, and such actions will engender hatred against the government forces. This was the conclusion of the Hunter Commission after the Amritsar massacre as well as the argument for minimum force in Gwynn's *Imperial Policing*—except that it extends to contact with armed insurgents operating in a populated area where assuring the population's favorable attitude toward the government takes precedence over the immediate restoration of order or the defeat of guerrillas. During the imperial policing era, these priorities were reversed, as discussed previously. Thompson goes on to explain that while "restrictive measures" will end a subversive movement, the government runs the risk of being labeled as "repressive," and the torture or murder of

[145] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 113.

[146] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 106.

detainees must be treated like the crimes they are, or else the government loses legitimacy and therefore the hearts and minds of the population.[147] In addition to following the rule of law and the use of absolute minimum force, "material well-being and progress" rounds out the trifecta of a proper hearts and minds campaign.[148] Thompson assumed that the target population will be almost hopelessly backward, impressed by "four-engined jet airliners landing at their own airports," the government's ability to provide schools, hospitals, roads, running water, electricity, and other components of "modern development."[149] He believed the population will then reject rule by the insurgents, which would mean the inevitable loss of the government's magnanimity, social welfare, and the road to modernity. Thompson's assumption is that people will set aside potential political grievances—whether real or potential—by focusing on material needs that the government can provide as long as it retains control.

The actual Malayan formula renders popular support for the government irrelevant, however. To the end of separating the insurgents from the population, after which the insurgents can be "mopped up" in free-fire areas established outside the population centers, Thompson describes how to isolate the people and control nearly every facet of their daily life. Assuming the country in question has no large population centers, the government should enact the "imposition of various control measures on the movement of both people and resources, all of which are designed to isolate the guerilla forces from the population, to provide protection for the people themselves and to eliminate the insurgent underground subversive organization in the villages."[150] At this point, perhaps after the people have been relocated and forced to rebuild their village in a defensible area, the government controls the food, activity within, and movement outside of the village—eventually secured not by British soldiers but by a native home guard loyal to the counterinsurgents.[151] With this degree of control, the target population's

[147] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 50–54, 87.

[148] Ibid., 63.

[149] Ibid., 66

[150] Ibid., 112.

[151] Ibid., 143–145.

personal affinity toward the government is hardly a concern—they could not support the insurgents if they wanted to, as the hearts and minds are effectively isolated, and destruction of the guerrillas may resume in the jungles and fields—despite Thompson's insistence that the "choice" to remain on the government's side must be "free."[152] After being forcefully relocated to a new village, surrounded by barbed wire and armed guard towers, then allotted only enough food to feed one's immediate family, freedom of choice to support the government has been removed.[153] The notion of minimum force as part of a hearts and minds campaign to gain positive support, especially under the new paradigm of absolute minimum force in all operations, was a marginal consideration if it existed at all in Malaya; however, the myth-making persisted.

In *Low Intensity Operations*, Frank Kitson (who served in Kenya and briefly in Malaya) writes,

> A further example of an issue on this sort concerns the extent to which force should be used, either by the police or by the army. In this case the politicians will rightly want to avoid the use of force as far as possible, and for as long as possible, because of the adverse effect it is bound to have on public opinion in the world at large and at home. At the same time there are military difficulties about using too little force and about delaying its application for too long, and these difficulties . . . must be presented to the political leadership by the military authorities after consultation with the other parties concerned, particularly the police.[154]

Gwynn addressed the conundrum that soldiers and police were potentially damned by the civil authorities and the general public either for using too much force or not enough, depending on the outcome of a particular engagement vis-à-vis casualties, media attention, and the suppression of subversive elements. Kitson sides with the civil authorities who view the perception of the hypothetical officer's act as the paramount consideration. To that end, minimum force, however loosely defined as an unwritten doctrinal component, provides the requisite justification for a court-martial should the outcome prove less than desirable. More importantly, Kitson draws a parallel between the

---

[152] Ibid.

[153] David French, *The British Way*, 175; Karl Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear: Malaya and the British Way of Counter-insurgency," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (2012): 685–686.

[154] Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 70.

use of force and alienating the population—the "adverse effect it is *bound to have* on public opinion in the world at large and at home." By this logic, any use of force will drive away popular support from the counterinsurgents. Therefore, using an absolute minimum force will have the minimum adverse effect on hearts and minds.

Minimum force was not a deciding factor in Malaya. Coercion and counter-terror were the default settings for British forces, especially before and during the implementation of the Briggs plan. As in Palestine before and Kenya afterward, a general belief that the native people and Chinese workers would respond only to force constituted the rationale—although not the primary reason—behind the use of coercion in lieu of minimum force and a hearts and minds campaign to garner popular support. In 1949, Sir Henry Gurney wrote to the Colonial Secretary, stating:

> A report from the Sitiawan illustrates the way in which the Chinese mind works. "A person arrested by the government gets adequate food and is not beaten up, but if one offense the bandits and is arrested, starvation, assault and probably death may result, for which reason it is better to offend the government than the bandits." This puts in a nutshell the problem of how to convince somebody who thinks like this without descending to Japanese methods. On the other hand, in dealing with Oriental terrorism armed with modern weapons our traditional British methods will always be too little and too late.[155]

If one assumes Gurney was referring to Gwynn's explanation of minimum force in the context of imperial policing, then the statement about "traditional British methods" makes more sense than referencing the military and police's organizational heritage from Ireland and the several subsequent revolts in Palestine—which constitute the true "traditional methods." The view that coercion and terrorism was the avenue to success in suppressing the insurgency was not confined to the colonial government and military leadership, as is usually the case. In 1950, the Colonial Secretary believed, "The dominant motive among the Chinese population, particularly the unprotected 'squatters' in the rural areas, is fear. The terrorist threat is certainly nearer and greater in some places than that of the Government and the Chinese mentality naturally tends to ensure more heavily against the Communists than ourselves. It is also true that the Asiatic mind

[155] French, *The British Way*, 65–66.

understands force."[156] Given this prevailing ideology, Templer's half-hearted population-centric approach truly is the outlier in British counterinsurgency from 1919 to 1970. In the meantime between Gurney and Templer, the Briggs Plan of separating the insurgents from the population, then instituting controls on the population's movement and food, had largely negated the assertion, despite later declarations from Templer, that a hearts and minds campaign to gain popular support was responsible for success. David French writes, "Within days of his arrival in Malaya, Templer told a group of senior civil servants . . . 'I could win this war in three months if I could get two thirds of the people on my side.' It is not a military problem, he said. It is a political war."[157] Therefore, in 1953, as insurgent activity was quickly declining, Templer directed his Director of Operations (DOO) to focus on the "political, economic, social and cultural development" of the Chinese immigrants who were mostly confined to their new villages under watch from British and home guard forces.[158] The sense that Templer was Malaya's savior through this hearts and minds strategy was compounded by the contrast in the frequency of attacks under Briggs as a violent reaction to the insurgents' separation from the public, coupled with the assassination of High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney in October 1951.[159] If security forces casualty rates and the numbers of overall attacks serve as a viable metric for the efficacy of a counterinsurgency campaign, Karl Hack's analysis of those figures shows a steep increase and decline under Briggs, before General Templer arrives on the island in 1952.[160] The violent reaction from the communists to the Briggs Plan coupled with a high-profile assassination gave the perception that the counterinsurgents were losing. Frank Kitson, however, describes the methodology of the Briggs Plan and its effect on the communists in glowing terms:

> General Briggs no only set up the machinery for conducting the campaign, he also produced the plan on which it was to be based. This plan called for action designed to provide a measure of security for the population

[156] Ibid., 66.

[157] Ibid., 174.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear," 674.

[160] Ibid., 672–673.

> followed by a break-up of the Communist organization outside the jungle by arrest and internment. The terrorists themselves were to be dealt with by interfering with their food supplies and by forcing them to expose themselves to action by the Security Forces. The most spectacular part of the plan consisted of an ambitious project of resettling the 400,000 squatters into new villages protected by a Home Guard specially raised for the purpose which reached a strength of 200,000 within four years.[161]

Kitson then notes how the Malayan Communist Party and its armed wing became "very worried" as a result.[162] Karl Hack explains why this was so:

> Notwithstanding a genuine sense of crisis among British officials, the insurgents were forced to blink first. In 1951 the ratio of insurgents killed for every security force personnel began an inexorable rise. By the year's end the vast majority of physical population movement had been achieved, so improvements to condition, and the development of operations around resettlements, could now develop. Security forces were also released for new tasks [in lieu of static defense], and retraining of police became possible from 1952. Forced onto the back foot, the communists issued 60 pages of "October 1951 Directives," which implied a 25% reduction in their frontline armed forces (to transfer people to planting, and close protection of the *Min Yuen*), and ordered a severe drop in a wide range of actions (especially sabotage).[163]

Of course, after this transition occurred, Templer arrived and began speaking about the hearts and minds of the people being the key to a victory that was already achieved. The *post-hoc ergo propter hoc* conclusion had to be that the arrival of Templer, and his supposedly soft approach to counterinsurgency, was the true path to victory. His DOO subsequently claimed "the shooting war in Malaya was only 25 per cent of the struggle against the communists. Progress had been most pronounced in the other 75 per cent—the struggle for the 'hearts and minds of the people.'"[164] The concomitant reduction in the number of hostile actions by the communists seemed to back up this claim, and so the minimum force myth prevailed among those looking at a successful counterinsurgency for lessons to apply to the next one.

---

[161] Frank Kitson, *A Bunch of Five* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 75

[162] Ibid.

[163] Hack, *Everyone Lived in Fear*, 674

[164] French, *The British Way*, 174.

Thomas Mockaitis states the initial reliance upon large-scale operations showed that the British were "slow to learn the lessons of the past," but a victory through small-unit operations coupled with the Briggs plan was only possible after the conventional "drives" through the jungles dispersed the communist formations into smaller units.[165] Mockaitis give the British forces a pass on the implementation of minimum force during this time of conventional tactics, a period which included the Batang Kali Massacre.[166] In December of 1948, members of the Scots Guards (and a few policemen) murdered 24 Chinese detainees under suspicion of supporting the communists. The government covered up the incident by relying on the time-honored "shot while attempting to escape" excuse that had been used at least since Ireland.[167] The soldiers were exonerated because the army's Special Investigation Branch was told to ignore the evidence provided for the case, and the Attorney General stated privately that, "there was something to be said for public executions as a legitimate means to demoralize those involved in the insurgency."[168] David French also noted that the subsequent amendment to the emergency regulations—namely 27A issued at the beginning of 1949—stated soldiers and police were justified in shooting prisoners who are trying to escape. The regulation was applied retroactively, thereby ensuring the Scots Guards could not be punished.[169] Subsequent amendments obviated some problems of detainee abuse by allowing for mass deportations of suspects to China which had begun in 1948 without the chance for appeal. British authorities believed a few actions of this kind would ensure compliance among remaining Chinese squatters in any given area.[170] Acting within the rule of law—one of Thompson's five principles of counterinsurgency—is not difficult when it legality becomes such an elastic concept.[171] The colonial police in Malaya were a large part of

---

[165] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 113; Eric Jardine, "The Influence of Military Materiel on Tactics and Strategy in Counterinsurgency: A Case of British Malaya," *Defence Studies* 11, no. 4 (2012): 645–646.

[166] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 53–55.

[167] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 53; Hack, "Everyone lived in Fear," 681.

[168] French, *The British Way*, 167–168.

[169] Ibid., 168.

[170] Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear," 681.

[171] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 52–53.

why, as Mockaitis claimed, the British were slow to learn the minimum force and small unit lessons of the past. Nichol Gray, discussed in the last insurgency in Palestine, arrived in Malaya with 500 additional Palestinian police to bolster the ranks in 1948, bringing their "much needed counter-insurgency experiences." Like the exported RUC officers to Palestine in the 1920s, much of this experience was anathema to minimum force and hearts and minds campaigns.[172] As was Gray's custom, he created special police forces for combatting the communists in the latter's area of operations (with 200 operating in the jungles by 1950), and he trained his police on the PPF's tactics for cordon and search operations, population controls, and—with additional experts from the Colonial Office—expertise on the enforcement of collective punishments such as curfews, shop closures, movement restrictions, and intercepting village collaborators.[173]

The nature of collective punishments in Malaya was not significantly different from Ireland, and Templer did not halt the practice. In fact, Templer ordered the destruction of Permatang Tinggi in August of 1952 not for what the inhabitants did, but what they failed to do in terms of providing information on the murder of a local official—they were not relocated into a new village.[174] Four months earlier, Templer punished the village of Tanjong Malim after 12 officials were murdered and the villagers failed to provide information—he closed down the schools, decreased the size of food rations, and imposed a 22-hour curfew.[175] The villagers were justifiably frightened because British forces had detained all of the inhabitants of a village named Tras following High Commissioner Gurney's assassination in 1951—the punishments served as effective warnings to neighboring population centers.[176] Collective punishments were more common in 1948 and 1949, before the majority of forced relocations took place—the house-burnings were conducted in the pursuit of intelligence, sometimes with the approval of the local civil-military committees established under the Briggs Plan and later

[172] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 167; French, *The British Way*, 18.

[173] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 167–168.

[174] French, *The British Way*, 109.

[175] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 122.

[176] Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear," 689.

refined under Templer. The decrease in the number of villages destroyed coincided with a 1950 regulation which allowed local magistrates to impose fines, order businesses to close, or billet security forces with the village's inhabitants.[177] By 1951, the insurgency was faltering, and the use of coercion had not changed, even if the rhetoric did with Templer's arrival and oversight of the final stage of the counter-insurgency.

D. KENYA

As Templer was "winning" hearts and minds through coercion and public works, the Mau Mau insurgency was beginning in 1952. No other British counterinsurgency effort was more antithetical to the exercise of minimum force, the goal of which has always been preventing the alienation of non-combatants who might not otherwise side with the insurgents' cause. Mockaitis, although conceding brutal methods were used, describes the horrors of the Kenyan campaign as strategically "confused."[178] Hearts and minds during this war was nearly as irrelevant as they were in the Jewish insurrection in Palestine. The insurgency was comprised of members of the Kikuyu tribe, for whom the primary grievance rested on 14, 000 square miles of land, and the presence of Europeans on it.[179] Isolating the insurgents (outside of Nairobi) from the remaining Kenyan population was, therefore, relatively easy, for both geographical and tribal reasons. Mockaitis, Sinclair, and others blamed the "outright brutality" of the counterinsurgency partially on racial animosity—the attitude of Europeans toward the Africans.[180] To be sure, many counterinsurgents harbored racist beliefs. Sinclair recounts an interview with a colonial policeman who served in Kenya: "White people were of importance simply by being white. It was an inescapable fact of colonial life."[181] From this statement and several others like it, she claims, "this [racist] belief shaped the attitude of the colonial

[177] French, *The British Way*, 108–109.

[178] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 124.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 44; Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 10; French, *The British Way*, 58.

[181] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 10.

authorities towards the colonized and thus, of the policeman towards the citizen."[182] The Colonial Secretary believed the Kikuyu were not a "warlike tribe," so it would be easy to intimidate them:

> Their history was that they cultivated land near the fringes of the bamboo forests, and, when the warlike Masai appeared, they fled to the forest. They are the most advanced tribe and give the best work, and, since, they have not lived by the spear, they have had to live by their brains. From having their ears to the ground to listen for the approach of the Masai, they have learned to have their ears to the ground to listen for any political tremors and turn them to their advantage. They are sometimes said to be like the Irish in politics, without their humour, and like the Jews in commerce, without Leviticus. They are disliked and despised by nearly all the other tribes, particularly the Luo and the Masai.[183]

However, in the current culture of political correctness, some historians may be lending too much explanatory power to racist interpretations of tribal character. One must recall that the methods used in Malaya and Kenya were inherited from Palestine, which in term trace their origins to the Irish Troubles. And while the Irish may have been viewed as inferior to the English, the fact that the Irish (or the Boers, for that matter) were white Europeans did not prevent or deter atrocities committed by Irish constables on their own people. But it did determine the tolerance of the British population to countenance such brutality, once they became aware of it. So, for instance, French was forbidden to institute concentration camps in Ireland, or attack the IRA from the air. Without a doubt, racism determined the character of many counterinsurgency methods, which was reason the British had simply to give up their campaign against Zionists in Palestine. There was simply not the same degree of popular interest or sympathy in a Britain struggling to recover from the effects of the war for indigenous populations of color in distant corners of the empire in rebellion against the crown in the immediate post–World War II era. Previous insurgencies have shown that the military and police were more willing to dispense with (relative or absolute) minimum force than the colonial government, the colonial governments were more willing to forsake minimum force than the Colonial Office, and the Colonial Office was generally more permissive than the Cabinet, which

[182] Ibid.

[183] French, *The British Way*, 58–59.

denied most significant requests authorizing more coercion or more destructive weapon systems, primarily aircraft used in an offensive capacity. Without the added pressure of the media on the Home and Colonial Offices, the liberal use of force generally proceeded unchecked in Africa. Coercion thrived out of public view and hence legal accountability.

The Kenyan security forces—particularly the colonial police—were understrength at the beginning of the emergency, yet they still conformed to the policing standards maintained through the last Palestinian insurgency and before. The paramilitary trends in Africa were increasing, and the use of force remained consistent with the degree of militarization. The Colonial Office, as discussed above, had been trying to impose a civil, or metropolitan, policing style on the colonial police—insisting on general disarmament and a return to crime prevention. However, "the need for containment of public disorder and civil disobedience . . . [and] a serious shortage of manpower" frustrated these attempts.[184] In Zanzibar, Nyasaland, Kenya, and elsewhere in Africa, police were giving up on the use of non-lethal or less-than-lethal weapons in the late 1940s and early 1950s, opting for lethal force at the outset of a disturbance, as opposed to an escalation of force as the disturbance progressed: "In the more serious situation, baton and gas use would be relinquished in the front line to armed policemen, each of whom would load a single round, and, if the crowd still failed to disperse, would raise their rifles . . . . This would be followed by a volley . . . repeated as necessary, based on the so-called principles of minimum force."[185] When abuses in the early stages of the Kenyan insurgency occurred, Mockaitis says, "These atrocities were perpetrated by individuals not subject to traditional army or police discipline."[186] This claim was true to a point, in that settler-led militias in Kenya as in Malaya inflicted great violence on the population. However, atrocities were not confined to these groups. Members of the Kenya Police would stand by idly as their native subordinates delivered "electric shocks to the testicles of suspects" or displaying mutilated bodies or decapitated heads on posts as a warning to other insurgents—the thinking was that the native forces under British command and control

[184] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 149.

[185] Ibid.

[186] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 44.

were perhaps exempt from the ideals of politically liberal warfare because they had "witnessed the horrors perpetrated by Mau Mau" and were justified for having "different standards of behavior."[187] The British officers in charge of native security forces were subject to traditional army and police discipline, so the exemption for these forces discarding minimum force provided by Mockaitis should not apply. Occasionally, however, underequipped native police without a British commander would resort to the use of "home-made Dane guns, poisoned arrows, spears and machetes," using the maximum lethal force at their disposal during relatively minor rioting.[188] Similarly, the Europeans in the Kenyan Police Reserve or the natives in the Kikuyu Home Guard committed atrocities against the Mau Mau and those believed to support them, but those acts did not account for the bulk of the coercion in Kenya.[189] Coercive practices were part of the institutional heritage for the regular military and British (white) colonial police. W.C. Johnson, Police Advisor the the Secretary of State for the Colonies submitted the "Report on the Colonial Police Service" on December 28, 1948, noting that colonial police in Africa "will act as a soldier although wearing a police uniform," so the civil policing model continued to diminish in the face of a greater desire for force to confront and contain the upheaval in the African colonies and protectorates.[190] Georgina Sinclair states the militarization of the police and concomitant use of force beyond the expectations of minimum force "increased in the post-war period with the general colonial upheaval and [was] noticeably bolstered by an intake of recruits who had served in the armed forces and the Palestinian Police."[191] With the influx of former Palestinian forces came allegations of beatings and torture of detainees, and an increase in the number of detainees "shot while trying to escape," "failing to halt" which had long been a euphemism for extra-judicial killings by crown forces, although it remains difficult to establish how many of the deaths were the result of genuine escape attempts.[192] The

[187] French, *The British Way*, 143.

[188] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 151.

[189] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency,* 45.

[190] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 146.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Bennett, "The Other Side of the COIN," 640; French, *The British Way*, 152, 156.

common knowledge off this euphemism implies an understanding by security forces that minimum force should be employed, and a subsequent decision to abandon it. This behavior had been the unwritten standard since the Troubles, although forces in Kenya ostensibly increased the practice to unprecedented levels, as Governor Baring reported in 1953 that 430 Kenyans were shot either trying to evade capture or attempting to escape after being captured—the police were assisted in this tally by the King's African Rifles, commanded by ethnically British officers, and the white settlers comprising the Kenyan Police Reserve (KPR).[193] A Parliamentary Delegation to Kenya reported to the Colonial Secretary in 1954, well after Erskine noted "there was a great deal of indiscriminate shooting" by police and soldiers before his arrival and attempted to reform some of the police practices, that the police were notorious for their "brutality and malpractice," often using their rifles as a first resort.[194] The police would sometimes strap the bodies of dead insurgents, as they did in Malaya, to the hoods and roofs of vehicles—simultaneously showing resolve to the noncombatants and warning other insurgents of their fate.[195] The white policemen and, to a lesser extent, some army units routinely employed torture in the interrogation of suspects; most soldiers did not speak the language, so they turned their captives over to police, knowing that the latter would be ill-treated; the more benign tactics involved death threats, gunshots near the prisoner, forcing the prisoner into stress positions, or beating metal buckets placed over the prisoners' heads.[196] Other abuses ranged from regular beatings, with some detainees rendered crippled as a result; threats of castration; prisoners being placed into earthen pits then partially buried; and, occasionally, rape.[197] Prosecutions for abuse that resulted in death were infrequent, as the Attorney General would find evidence from coroners' reports for assault charges but not murder or manslaughter; this reduction in the charges brought against policemen for killing detainees occurred at least 41 times in the course of the counterinsurgency, but the

[193] French, *The British Way*, 156; Bennett, "The Other Side of the COIN," 649–650.

[194] Bennett, "The Other Side," 648–649, 651.

[195] French, *The British Way*, 152.

[196] Ibid., 158

[197] David Anderson, "British Abuse and Torture in Kenya's Counter-insurgency, 1952–1960," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (September 2012), 702, 704–705, 708.

remaining charges against policemen and soldiers for mishandling detainees were dropped in 1957 when London and Nairobi passed Regulation 17 of the Emergency Regulations in July—the regulation rendered "compelling force" and "punitive force" committed in the routine handling of prisoners lawful.[198] The Attorney General and Governor Baring were not overly concerned with the allegations of prisoner abuse and deaths becoming public knowledge by "biased journalists" because of the detention camps' remoteness in Kenya.[199] Emergency regulations gave a pass to soldiers as well:

> [military forces] were ordered to report the deaths of any Mau Mau suspects they had killed to the nearest magistrate, but 'Provided they report any casualties inflicted on the enemy as soon as they can to the Police, the Police will then inform a magistrate who will accept the report and, unless there are exceptional circumstances, will degree that no inquest is necessary. The case is then legally closed and no subsequent charges can affect the issue.'[200]

In effect, while Erskine did not approve of crown forces' ill treatment of prisoners, emergency regulations provided a de facto legalization of torture and extrajudicial killings. With little threat of the media creating a public debacle, the practice continued with no regard to "alienating the population," which is the leitmotif accompanying minimum force.

The influence of the Palestinian policemen and soldiers recruited into the Kenya Police affected the organizational structure in addition to the importation of coercive lessons learned from previous insurgencies. In 1948, Kenyan police forces created the "emergency company" that functioned similar to ADRIC in Ireland in terms of an autonomous offensive unit. In 1953, it was renamed the General Service Unit (GSU) and organized like the Palestine Police Mobile Force, with the same mission to serve as a mounted "strike force" consisting of 32 platoons, with 1,100 men in total—equipment mirrored that of the PPMF with "Bren guns, rifles, 2-inch mortars and small arms."[201] Commissioner of Police, Richard Catling, mandated that no policeman could serve more

198 Ibid., 708.

199 Ibid., 710.

200 French, *The British Way*, 86

201 Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 152.

than two years in the GSU, out of fear that the police force was becoming too militarized; however, this may have had the opposite effect on the regular force, as the GSU was utilized in a far more offensive capacity than the standard police, and recycled policemen undoubtedly retained some of their GSU habits after reintegration—even if they weren't part of the Palestinian police originally.[202]

In the examination of the regular and auxiliary military's behavior, Huw Bennett and Rod Thornton have clashed in dueling articles about what constitutes "British" forces and how that definition influences the evaluation of minimum force practice in Kenya.[203] Thornton would exempt African units such as the King's Africa Rifles (KAR) while Bennett considers their behavior in the "British" totality because of their training by white British officers and NCOs, even if such units were not commanded by white British officers, as Frank Kitson points out in *Bunch of Five*.[204] If minimum force were truly a central tenet of the British military—as Thornton and Mockaitis repeated claim—then the KAR's trainers would have instilled that virtue into the KAR's recruits, or the British officers commanding some of the locally raised forces would have prevented excesses in the use of force. Bennett maintains that even seconded officers serving in the KAR are not exempt from the putative minimum force standard, so the actions of those regiments are not exempt from consideration in the minimum force debate.[205] The number of ethnically British officers serving in the KAR favors Bennett's interpretation:

> Most officers in the KAR were seconded from British battalions for two or three years, and during the national service era, the KAR could afford to select high quality candidates as it proved a popular choice. The point is reinforced by analysing the numbers of British Army officers on secondment in the KAR during the Emergency's opening phase. At the Emergency's declaration in October 1952, 9 Lieutenant-Colonels, 47 Majors, 72 Captains, 22 Lieutenants and one Chaplain, 4th Class, from the British Army were placed in King's African Rifles units. They came from regiments, such as the Durham Light Infantry, the Essex Regiment, the

[202] Ibid., 153.

[203] Bennett, "The Other Side of the COIN," 638–664; Rod Thornton, "'Minimum Force': A Reply to Huw Bennett," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 20, no. 1 (April 2009), 215–226; Huw Bennett, "Minimum Force in British Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 21, no. 3 (September 2010): 429–475.

[204] Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 11.

[205] Bennett, "Minimum Force in British Counterinsurgency," 465.

> Buffs and the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers. By December, the number of British officers on secondment had risen to 223, drawn from regiments such as the Sherwood Foresters the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, the Glosters and the Dorsets. In April 1953, the number had risen again—to 227, including 57 Captains, from units such as the Royal Hampshires, the Somerset Light Infantry, and the Surreys. The staff officers running the whole operation (a Lieutenant-General, two Brigadiers, three Colonels, ten Lieutenant-Colonels and five Majors) all came from the regular army too.[206]

Thornton's insistence that Africans cannot be held to the same standard as British soldiers, despite similar training, is not necessarily racist, as Bennett suggests. However, it does raise questions regarding the degree to which minimum force was "drilled into soldiers," to borrow a phrase from Mockaitis.[207] If the Africans in the KAR employed British military tactics but not minimum force, the latter was not prevalent during training. If minimum force was not prevalent during training, it is not central to British counterinsurgency. When minimum force is discussed at all during the Kenyan campaign, it follows the relative minimum force advocated by Sir Charles Gwynn. The commander of the 39th Infantry Brigade comprised of units of the Buffs, Devons, and Lancashire Fusiliers, issued rules of engagement in 1953: "The principle of the 'minimum force necessary' must apply in all circumstances and each of the cases described below. This principle is not really restrictive in fact the minimum force necessary might be the maximum force a soldier or party of soldiers could muster."[208] Despite this proclamation of relative minimum force, the military in Kenya employed "special areas" or "prohibited areas" that function as modern free-fire areas (as they did in Palestine, then Malaya), in which lethal force is authorized without warning (following Governor Baring's abrogation of the requirement in 1953), regardless of whether the target or targets are armed or unarmed.[209] Free-fire areas are anathema to minimum force doctrine, even as Gwynn described it. Bennett points out that "a truly minimum

---

[206] Ibid.,

[207] Bennett, "Minimum Force in British Counterinsurgency," 464; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 40.

[208] French, *The British Way*, 84.

[209] Ibid., 85.

force policy would have instructed troops to try and capture those fleeing first, and to fire only as a last resort."[210] Mockaitis claims that such instances of force employed in these prohibited areas, such as the bombing of the Aberdares Forest and the Mount Kenya Preserve, were subject to "rules of conventional engagement not the common law principle of minimum force," although he previously argued in *British Counterinsurgency* that minimum force was the default rule of engagement for *all* military operations as early as the Arab Revolt in 1936.[211] Mockaitis claims Erskine adhered to minimum force doctrine in allowing bombing in these areas simply because the latter claimed, "This is absolutely fair because nobody is supposed to be in the prohibited area."[212] Similarly, Stephan Chappell argues that the RAF helped to win hearts and minds of the neutral population with this bombing campaign, as it avoided civilian casualties by bombing only the prohibited areas.[213] Of course, this claim is unknowable. Designating an area as prohibited does not prevent noncombatants from traversing it, and pilots could not know if those traversing the prohibited areas were Mau Mau insurgents or unaffiliated foragers. In fact, Mockaitis admits Kenyan women were likely shot in these prohibited areas while looking for food in the Fort Hall district.[214]

The use of exemplary force and coercion by the army was greater on the ground than it was from the air, and while the temptation for many historians to blame white settlers for the bulk of the violence is convenient, the explanation does not account for why the British military and police would buckle under the political pressure from the white settlers in Kenya and therefore abandon minimum force doctrine, if it existed in practice.[215] In Kenya, Erskine decided to mimic the Malayan plan of forced relocation.

---

[210] Huw Bennett, "The Mau Mau Emergency as Part of the British Army's Post-War Counter-Insurgency Experience," *Defense and Security Analysis* 23, no. 2 (2007), 150.

[211] Thomas Mockaitis, "Minimum Force, British Counter-Insurgency and the Mau Mau Rebellion: A Reply," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 3, no. 2 (1992): 88; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 33.

[212] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 36.

[213] Stephen Chappell, "Airpower in the Mau Mau conflict: The Government's Chief Weapon," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 22, no. 3 (2011), 501.

[214] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 127.

[215] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 128; John Newsinger, "Minimum Force, British Counter-Insurgency and the Mau Mau Rebellion," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 3, no. 1 (1992): 48.

The tasked was rendered more difficult, however, by the Kikuyu's proclivity for dispersed dwellings in lieu of more tightly knit villages.[216] In addition to creating village areas for the Kikuyu, Erskine wanted to "lock down" the tribe's land, detaining everyone even suspected of supporting the Mau Mau.[217] Instead of the Malayan standard village model and food controls, two types of villages were erected: one for the loyalists and Home Guards, and another type of distinctly punitive village for suspected Mau Mau supporters that would incorporate collective punishments, food controls, and bars from travelling to or trading with adjacent population centers.[218] This process followed the largest cordon and search operation, ANVIL, during which approximately 24,100 Kenyans (half the Kikuyu population) were detained without trial and deported back to the Reserves at gunpoint, to begin the "villagization" process and a new life behind barbed wire and scarce resources.[219] The areas outside the villages were designated free-fire areas, as discussed previously. The numbers of Kikuyu forcibly resettled into punitive villages greatly overshadowed those in Malaya:

> Forced resettlement represented a massive demographic dislocation. In Malaya about 423,000 Chinese squatters were moved into 410 new villages, and about 650,000 Chinese mind and estate workers were subject to "regrouping" in wired-in villages. As the total Chinese population in Malay amounted to 2,153,000 according to the 1953 census, the 1,073,000 people forcibly relocated represented almost exactly half of the Chinese population of the country. The proportion of the target population moved in Kenya was even larger. Between June 1954 and October 1955, from a total target population of 1,555,000 (Kikuyu, Meru, and Embu) as measured by the 1948 census, about 1,077,500 people, or 69 per cent, were forcibly moved to one of the 854 new villages.[220]

These actions against the Kikuyu were not conducted by white vigilante settlers, but those of the British government in Kenya. The combination of forced relocation, mass indefinite detention during cordon and search operations, the subsequent abuse at the

---

[216] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 129–130.

[217] French, *The British Way*, 118.

[218] Ibid., 119.

[219] Newsinger, "Minimum Force and the Mau Mau Rebellion," 49; French, *The British Way*, 116–120.

[220] French, *The British Way*, 120.

hands of white British police in the detention camps, food controls, and collective punishments in the specifically punitive villages overshadows the levels of coercion by the British in Malaya, without the palliative declarations of a hearts and minds campaign involving public services. The brutality of the KPR, however, compounds the coercive force used by the British government in Kenya, given the fact that the white settlers were legitimized by the government in an attempt to rein in the settlers' behavior.[221] Minimum force primacy advocates like Mockaitis, Newsinger, and Thornton would transfer the minimum force violations, and the notable absence of a magnanimous hearts and minds campaign, that supposedly alienated the population to the settlers, when the systemic violence of villagization and prohibited areas organized by Baring and Erskine constituted the majority of the excessive force in Kenya.

At the end of the counterinsurgency in Kenya, however, despite talk of absolute minimum force being central to retaining the loyalty of the target population, Frank Kitson saw merit in the "threats of unpleasantness on a nationwide scale. There seemed to be something in this point worth writing about and arising out of it were such subjects as population control and the resettlement of communities in the interests of security."[222] Despite the noticeable lack of minimum force in Kenya, the counterinsurgency campaign has been deemed a success. Erskine won the conflict because he imitated Briggs in Malaya, not the more benign depictions of Templer, who was almost as coercive as Briggs. Once again, the separation of the population from insurgents and denying the former's support for the latter in terms of materiel and intangible aid proved the determining factor. British forces' ability to wage "conventional war" against insurgents in the free-fire areas after the villagization process ran a close second. To say the army was less brutal than the police, who were less brutal than the white settlers or Kikuyu Home Guards does not show that minimum force doctrine was present, much less that it was crucial to victory. During the Kenyan campaign, Mockaitis points to the decrease of excessive force against noncombatants starting in 1954 as proof that minimum force was, "in theory," present in the strategic and operational execution. However, as the Kikuyu

[221] Thornton, "'Minimum Force': A Reply to Huw Bennett," 216–217.

[222] Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 59.

population was largely deported to new villages where the British could control everything from food supplies to the movements of individuals in and between villages. In this way, they could claim that offensive action was taking place only outside of the major population centers, hence minimum force doctrine remained the rule.

E. CYPRUS

The final putative victory of the immediate post-war counterinsurgencies came in Cyprus. The Greek Cypriots ended British colonial rule, but failed to achieve enosis (merging with Greece), which the Turks and the Turkish Cypriots, who made up 20 per cent of the population, adamantly opposed. Nevertheless, many historians consider the British effort there a success for preventing the Greek annexation of Cyprus, despite the fact that the British military forces were thereafter relegated to their base areas. The British were poorly placed to conduct a hearts and minds campaign, as nearly 80 per cent of the population – that is, all of the Greek Cypriots—wanted enosis. At the beginning of hostilities, the British were unaware of how popular the movement really was, and how much the enemy commander, Colonel Geogrios Grivas, had prepared for the struggle.[223] The *Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston* (EOKA), as the military wing of the enosis effort, and its supports were poorly organized, equipped, and trained.[224] Field Marshal Sir John Harding was, like Templer, both military commander and governor—a "supremo." The political situation was atypical vis-à-vis the other wars of decolonialization because the target population was not, in the view of the Colonial Office, a collection of what Callwell would have called "savages." Frank Kitson recounts the presence of media as a possible factor in the treatment of Cypriots: "One of the results of the fighting in Cyprus was that many journalists descended on the island. They mostly lived in the largest and most luxurious hotel in Nicosia waiting eagerly for incidents to report."[225] Harding requested permission to employ standard collective punishments in Cyprus, and the Colonial Office begrudgingly allowed it, stating, "The

[223] Simon Robbins, "The British Counter-Insurgency in Cyprus," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (2012), 721; Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 33.

[224] Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations*, 150–153.

[225] Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, 247.

arguments against its use in Cyprus are that it is inappropriate to use such a tribal method against a more developed people." The British government was also concerned, to a lesser extent, that such methods would "alienate other sections of Cypriots, in a way that strict enforcement of the law would not."[226] This differing attitude about the Cypriots would manifest itself in the insistence on a civil policing method to a degree unseen in Malaya and Kenya. While Harding wanted the police to be "involved in army-style operations," the Colonial Office wanted to export the metropolitan civil policing model once again. John Biles, the Deputy Commissioner of Police in Cyprus, quickly resigned after the emergency began because "political interference" with police operations and personnel by the Colonial Office to export Britishness to the colony "made the job of colonial policemen untenable."[227] Because the police force was in disarray, gathering information regarding the enemy's disposition and composition was inhibited, and Harding had to spend the first phase of the emergency in 1955 rebuilding the defunct organization, which was largely completed by July of 1956.[228]

The military and police under Harding were neither gentle in their treatment of Cypriots nor content with small-unit operations against insurgent cells. Between December of 1956 and March of 1957, the British delivered what Grivas called "hard blows" in conducting large operations resulting in mass arrests and detentions; by February 1957, only 69 insurgents were killed by security forces, but the number of insurgent units was diminished by British estimates from 16 to 5.[229] One example of large initial operations used to disperse the insurgency in Cyprus occurred in October of 1956, with a clearing operation called Sparrowhawk, which covered approximately 200 square miles in the Kyrenia Mountains, "uncovering arms and ammunition, including a machine gun, ammunition bombs, bedding, and food and capturing a gang of six men, including Pliotis Christofi, a gang leader with a £5,000 reward on his head."[230]

---

[226] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 135–136.

[227] Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, 120.

[228] Robbins, "The British Counter-Insurgency in Cyprus," 725.

[229] Ibid., 727.

[230] Ibid.

Harding's Director of Operations, Brigadier General Baker, believed that his mission was "to bring home to the ordinary people the hard fact that the results of terrorism include hardship to themselves and so to create conditions predisposing people in favor of a political settlement," even if such collective punishments were "contrary to the principles held by civilized countries of individual responsibility and the rule of law, [and] are regarded as illiberal by the free world."[231] Harding himself shared this view, claiming he wanted to strike "the balance of fear, fear of punishment by the court, fear of defeat by the security forces, on the one hand, and fear of retribution or punishment by the EOKA on the other hand." On the subject of collective punishments, Harding said, "Apart from their intrinsic justification, one of the results of the various measures such as collective fines, curfews and other restrictions that have recently been increased is the restoration of respect for authority."[232] Harding's view, and that of his subordinate, seems to have derived from the initial failure to produce results in intelligence or popular support following the announcement in 1955 of a 38 million pound development plan.[233] The collective punishments came hard on the heels of that failed public bribery attempt, as Harding's government collected 108,000 pounds in 17 collective fines over the next year.[234] Despite viewing common punishments such as curfews and business closures as sufficient for the adult population, Harding ran into a peculiar problem with the Greek Cypriot youth, whom Grivas recruited early. The youth would spit on security forces or assault them with rocks, so Harding had them detained and caned for the offenses.[235] Cordon and search operations sometimes served both offensive and punitive functions in Cyprus. In "British Counter-Insurgency in Cyprus," Simon Robbins explains:

> . . . following the shooting of a policeman in Nicosia, troops wired off the area, set up posts on rooftops, and searched every house. They then closed that part of the city, 31 houses and 20 shops, for three months, evicting the inhabitants with what they could carry, leaving them homeless, unemployed, and bankrupt. The first collective punishment of £2,000 was

---

[231] French, *The British Way*, 67, 106.

[232] Ibid., 67, 108.

[233] Robbins, "The British Counter-Insurgency in Cyprus," 731.

[234] French, "*The British Way*," 109.

[235] Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 136.

> imposed on 4 December 1955 at Lefkoniko after the village post office had been blown up. Other collective fines levied £35,000 from Limassol and £40,000 from Famagusta in September 1956, as punishment for failing to cooperate with the security forces and refusing to reveal useful information. On two occasions, the occupants of houses and shop, which were suspected of being used by the insurgents, were evicted and the property either destroyed or requisitioned.[236]

If the village names were Irish instead of Greek and the fines lower, one would not be able to tell to which conflict these anecdotes belonged, given the degree of Black and Tan-inspired violence. The phrase, "shot while trying to escape," had become so prevalent in Cyprus that the Colonial Secretary asked the government in Cyprus to verify the veracity of the reports, stating, "there seems to have been barely even the pretence that it was true."[237] The Cypriots alleged the usual horrors were being committed by British forces against insurgents and noncombatants under arrest, and some of the allegations were supported by evidence, such as the six deaths during interrogation, and prisoners showing the physicals signs of abuse.[238] A soldier with the 2nd Battalion Parachute Regiment stated, "Special Branch . . . were bastards. They really knocked these blokes about; I could hear them crying. None of us liked this but I have to admit the terrorists talked."[239] Coroner reports in 1958 following a reprisal resulting in mass arrests following the death of a soldier's wife at the hands of insurgents stated that "a degree of force that would appear to be entirely unjustified was used by security forces."[240] A soldier involved in that reprisal wrote to his father, saying

> I suppose you heard on the radio about all the trouble we had in Mafagusta last Friday. About the two women being shot, one dead and the other very ill. The troops were called out . . . they gave the Greeks a hell of a time. The troops just went mad. There was no order for the first two hours. The officers could not control them. I suppose heard what the Mayor of Famagusta said, '250 injured,' and I'll bet most of them had their heads

---

[236] Robbins, "The British Counter-Insurgency in Cyprus," 732.

[237] French, *The British Way*, 156.

[238] Robbins, "The British Counter-Insurgency in Cyprus," 731.

[239] Ibid.,

[240] French, *The British Way*, 144.

> split open. The lads all had riot sticks. In the first two hours they hit every Greek Male they could lay their hands on.[241]

This reprisal differs significantly with those committed by the RIC and soldiers during the Troubles, insofar as the officers in Ireland were usually quick to regain control of their men and usher them back to the barracks. Conversely, another soldier in Cyprus reported that he and his fellow soldiers were "conscious that whenever we picked up people they would then try to either damage themselves or pretend that you had damaged them"; the soldiers therefore took special care in writing reports on the matter in the attempt to clear themselves of wrong-doing.[242] Some of the EOKA's propaganda intimates a degree of truth to detainees feigning injury for political purposes, but the substantiated claims render those falsehoods irrelevant in the analysis of British behavior in Cyprus.

In Cyprus, like Malaya and Kenya, the British government publicly claimed an adherence to minimum force doctrine consistent with democratic principles. The Secretary of State for War, Christopher Soames, stated in the same speech to the Commons in 1958 that "it is known by every soldier in Cyprus that, whatever action he is called upon to take, he has to do it with the minimum of force . . . . We must never forget that the role of the security forces is to conquer terrorism, and there will be many incidents when the minimum Force necessary will be quite a lot of force."[243] Secretary Soames alluded to Gwynn's caveat that minimum force doctrine is relative to the situation and not an absolute minimum degree of force—a statement that was rare coming from Cabinet members given their aversion to large operations resulting in multiple casualties or weapon systems possessing great destructive potential. The soldiers and police in Cyprus, however, acted in manner incongruent with minimum force often enough and with sufficient severity when they did to conclude that even relative minimum force was abandoned more than it was followed.

---

[241] Ibid, 169.

[242] French, *The British Way*, 144.

[243] Ibid., 84.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

V. CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that the historical record fails to support the assertion by practitioners like Templer, Thompson, and Kitson and some historians, among them Mockaitis and Nagl, that minimum force has been a central pillar of British counterinsurgency theory and practice. Templer insisted that his "hearts and minds" campaign, consisting primarily of benign treatment and the provision of public services to increase the standard of living and therefore show the targeted population that the government is its benefactor and friend was responsible for British success in Malaya. Thompson and Kitson likewise claimed minimum force was responsible—in whole or part—for the victories in Malaya, Kenya, and Cyprus. A closer examination, however, shows a liberal use of exemplary force, to include collective punishments, large screening operations with loose fire discipline, extra-judicial killings, and detention camps that violated the human rights of all involved, to have been the mainstays of British counterinsurgency methods that the British ignored as best they could. While Thomas Mockaitis concludes that minimum force doctrine was practiced throughout the decolonialization period, his *British Counterinsurgency 1919–60* lists numerous exceptions to minimum force in each campaign. Nevertheless, he treats these instances as anomalies—crimes committed by inexperienced or vengeful soldiers who were nearly always punished by the military leadership. In fact, violations of IHL were not only tolerated by the civil and military hierarchy. They were frequently encouraged by a British government whose 1939 Emergency Powers Act gave colonial governments wide powers to prosecute counterinsurgencies free of due process concerns, delayed ratification of the 1948 Geneva Human Rights Convention for almost a decade, or sought legal loopholes in the European convention of Human Rights to give their colonial soldiers and policemen a free hand to ignore IHL constraints. Commanders justified the requirement to ignore legal constraints or interpret their powers liberally as a requirement to keep discipline among the forces of order, who would surely take matters into their own hands unless insurgents and their supporters were dealt with summarily. Templer continued use the concentration "villages" in Malaya that Briggs had created. The barbed

wire, armed guards, guard towers, collective punishments, and food controls ensured that the villagers could not support the insurgency for long even if they were inclined to do so. Winning "hearts and minds" was the least of the government's concerns. The Kenyan campaign was modeled after Malaya, but surely exceeded it in brutality. Thousands died, mostly Kikuyu, but the media was largely absent, or somewhat complicit when present, as Thompson recounted in *Defeating Communist Insurgency*. In both Malaya and Kenya, the object of defeating insurgents who were ethnic minorities was made easier because violence could be applied to them without raising the ire of the majority. If the Chinese immigrants or Kikuyu were causing trouble, their mistreatment and deaths meant little to those who saw them as the Other—by both the indigenous population and the security forces themselves. In Cyprus, we also see the impact of racial attitudes, as greater care was taken by crown forces to commit less violence against those who were racially closer to the white Europeans, although the soldiers and police still had a few larks in "bashing wogs" when they weren't implementing Black and Tan tactics. The United Nations' involvement in Cyprus, coupled with the political dynamics of the Cold War which required that Britain appease Greece, a NATO ally, accounted for the diminished, although consistent, levels of coercion in Cyprus more than racial attitudes, which were still bad.

Others have taken the myth of minimum force, despite baseless claims about its affect, and imposed the concept on a rubric with which to evaluate subsequent counterinsurgencies. In *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, John Nagl presents two methods of counterinsurgency: total annihilation and gaining the popular support of the people.[244] He cites Thompson and Kitson as proponents of minimum force, which he defines as one of five essential counterinsurgency components.[245] His prescription, based on the victory in Malaya consists of whether doctrine is conducive to victory, the military establishes goals to achieve it, there is unity of command, minimum force is used, and the military is organized for the threat.[246] Creating counterinsurgency

[244] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup*, 26.

[245] Ibid., 28–30.

[246] Ibid., 30.

prescriptions is nothing new, of course. Callwell, Gwynn, Simson, Thompson, Galula, Kitson, and others have made significant, influential contributions to strategy for counterinsurgency wars (although there was nothing limited about Callwell's approach). While Mockaitis argues that the use of coercive force significantly changed for the British after the experiences of Amritsar and Ireland, there is little evidence that this was so. Population resettlement in concentration camps, free fire zones, calorie control, indefinite internment, prisoner mistreatment, summary executions and disappearances remained staples of British counterinsurgency strategies at least through Kenya, with the aid of complicit jurists and officials.[247] When Nagl claims victory goes to the counterinsurgent force that learns to adapt based on his principles derived from British experience, he is only partially correct.[248] British counterinsurgency successes were either achieved through a political solution, like Palestine in 1939, Malaya to degree, or Cyprus, or were "won" with a degree of violence and a violation of IHL that hardly brings credit to the counterinsurgent, much less supports the concept of minimum force.

It may be true that Amritsar and the Troubles served as transitions in British counterinsurgency theory between small wars of the 19th century and colonial policing/COIN of the 20th. However, many of the methods remained the same. In Ireland, reprisals for insurgent violence carried out against the population considered, rightly or not, to be complicit were common. The military and civil leadership sympathized with the soldiers and policemen conducting them and provided legal cover. Indeed, their argument was that, if they failed to become complicit in such behavior, then the reprisals would only grow worse and military and police discipline would be in jeopardy of collapse. The security forces hit the population in the pocketbook, destroying businesses key to their economic survival—mainly general stores and creameries. House demolitions created fear that caused many land-owners to discourage the IRA from ambushing patrols near their property. Extra-judicial killings became common when the local courts could not function because of insurgent intimidation of jurors and justices. Small unit tactics took the place of large scale drives after the latter dispersed the enemy

[247] French, *The British Way*, 135.

[248] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup*, 4–30.

formations or compelled them to operate in smaller numbers. The British created their own flying columns, which defeated much the IRA, who then regressed to common terrorism, just as Grivas was later forced to do for the same reasons in Cyprus. The RIC and the RUC passed these lessons on to colonial police operating throughout the empire in Palestine, Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, and elsewhere. In each subsequent counterinsurgency, the police and soldiers at the tactical, operational, and occasionally strategic levels believed that the proverbial stick produced results when the carrot failed, if they bothered with the pretense of the carrot at all.

The pretense of hearts and minds became necessary as domestic and international opinion coalesced with international humanitarian law in the wake of Nazi atrocities in World War II in the name of counterinsurgency. The British avoided the restrictions imposed by Geneva and the ECHR as long as possible, then simply refused to comply thereafter, posing legal objections to various provisions that would curb the scope of force against civilians. Despite the rhetoric from the British government, at both state and colonial levels, this evasion of IHL was evidence that a commitment to minimum force and prosecuting counterinsurgency operations within the confines of the law was merely rhetorical. Free fire zones, the use of air power against insurgents and their supporters are not consistent with minimum force doctrine. Occasionally, the British government dispensed with any pretense to minimum force altogether—in 1964, the British took a page out of Callwell's *Small Wars* in the Radfan area north of Aden, where the goal was to create a famine through destruction if they "could not break the link between the insurgents and their supporters by placing the latter in wired-in villages" because the geography prevented it.[249] The air campaign, designed to raze villages and destroy crops to starve the people, consisted of "600 air sorties, fired 2,500 rockets and 200,000 cannon shells, and the Royal Artillery fired 20,000 rounds of artillery ammunition," to target "a whole ethnic group and [transform] them into refugees."[250] The plan in Oman was similar, but the population acquiesced before the British destroyed them:

[249] French, *The British Way*, 126, 129.

[250] Ibid., 130–131.

> . . . after locally raised troops had sealed off the dissident areas, aircraft would make demonstration flights and drop warning leaflets to intimidate them. Phase two would consist of more warning leaflets intended to give the dissidents a chance to get clear of the target area, followed by attacks on three forts, which were obvious military objectives. If that failed to induce them to surrender, air power would be used to impose a form of population control over the insurgents and their supporters. Aircraft would destroy civil society on the Jebel Akhdar by targeting the water supply of selected villages and by making it impossible for farmers to gather their harvest. The final phase would be implemented only if earlier operations did not bring the insurgents to heel. It would consist of what [Air Vice Marshal] Heath euphemistically called the "denial of selected villages by ultimatum under threat of air attack." What he meant was that, after yet another round of warning leaflets, the RAF would bomb the villages.[251]

This tactic would give the British government pause in approving similar measures later in the Radfan air campaign, but continued insurgent resistance there and the desire to end the conflict quickly engendered approval by the Colonial Secretary, Duncan Sandys.[252]

As discussed earlier, Mockaitis claimed minimum force pertained to all military and police operations—the doctrine was "drilled into them"—by the time of the Arab Revolt in 1936. But 30 years later, the British government had regressed to a *Small Wars* mindset vis-à-vis the use of force. One could argue that excessive force accounted for the failure of the British to achieve their goals in Oman and the Radfan, because it alienated the people. But because the British could not relocate the population as they had earlier in Malaya and Kenya, they resorted to air power and intimidation in an attempt to achieve their goals, one more example of the use of excessive force as a major tool in the counterinsurgency toolbox. More importantly, the operations deemed unequivocal successes immediately following Palestine—namely, Malaya and Kenya—displayed no more minimum force in practice than those before them. Therefore, minimum force cannot be considered a central element in counterinsurgency doctrine and practice, based on those British experiences.

If minimum force cannot be included in the prescription for successful counterinsurgency, the only remaining factors consist of separating the population from

[251] Ibid., 128.

[252] Ibid., 129.

the insurgents and controlling the former's behavior. This method allowed the British military and police, more than anything else, to defeat the insurgents in conventional combat outside of the newly established population centers. Popular support, hearts and minds, was not won through the careful application of lethality or the promise of a better life should the government prevail. It was not won at all.

Even if population control is the key to success, it still may not apply to all insurgencies, especially the most recent ones in Iraq and Afghanistan, which questions the validity of any counterinsurgency prescription based on British experience given the restrictions placed on Western nations' militaries by international law. Could the U.S. Army have displaced the millions of inhabitants in Baghdad, Iraq and placed them into new villages in the Anbar province? It would have been a herculean, if not quixotic, effort. The most powerful insurgent group in Iraq, Jaysh al Mahdi, came from the Shiite majority, as opposed to the ethnic minorities in Malaya and Kenya from whom the insurgents drew strength.[253] In many respects, however, ethnic cleansing and refugee flows have become the new form of concentration camps, while drones offer the latest application of air power in counterinsurgency to intimidate the population and the realization of free fire zones.

After Nagl deployed to Iraq, he intimated that his own counterinsurgency paradigm was inapplicable. After recounting the problems he and his unit faced in gaining the population's trust, he wrote, "It is perhaps only a slight exaggeration to suggest that, on their own, foreign forces cannot defeat an insurgency; the best they can hope for is to create the conditions that will enable local forces to win it for them."[254] He prevented any dissonance with his book's thesis by rationalizing that the British in Malaya had been present for over a decade, so they had enough time to build a bond with the people.[255] Apparently, that trust was insufficient, as the British felt compelled to corral the Chinese into camps to prevent them from supporting the communists.

---

[253] The author uses his experience as a U.S. army intelligence officer operating at different times at the division, brigade, and battalion level in Baghdad, Iraq, from 2004–2005 and 2006–2008.

[254] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup*, xiii-xiv of the preface.

[255] Ibid.

While the popular conception of minimum force has evolved over time to fit the changing attitudes about the role and acceptable targets of force in counterinsurgency, the victories in Malaya, Kenya, and Cyprus cannot be attributed to either the relative or absolute versions of minimum force. The British clearly violated both variants, although the relative minimum force advocated by Sir Charles Gwynn in *Imperial Policing* was far more prevalent in the memoirs, letters, and orders issued by officers at the regimental level and below, as well as some policemen. The colonial police, as an institution, refused to allow senior officials to implement the civil policing model—the reality of colonial policing required, in the policeman's view, a more mobile force with greater lethality to force compliance on the population rather than to gain its trust. Police walking a beat with batons would not suffice. The policing methods inherited through the RIC and later the Palestine Police were not conducive to winning hearts and minds. But policemen operated on the assumption that the threat of coercive force would intimidate the population into submission.

Lastly, while the racial attitudes of crown forces were backwards by today's standards, the evil did not come simply from the belief that colonial subjects were racially and culturally inferior and worthy of contempt. The underlying assumption of colonial policing stemmed from the belief that the respect of indigenous people for the colonial power could be guaranteed only by fear of serious reprisals should they step out of line. Experience dating at least from the Indian Mutiny of 1857, taught crown forces that such a belief was warranted by the effects brutal methods had on the population, even in conflicts the British ultimately lost. To the security forces, losses were political—never tactical—and the national or colonial authorities served only to restrain the strong hand the population required for order. By doing this, they risks losing control. Palestine was seen as a victory won by successful counterinsurgency tactics, while Ireland came to be viewed as a tactical victory squandered by Westminster. What they failed to realize was that it was the brutality of their tactics there that convinced London that the prize was not worth winning under such circumstances. Only rarely were soldiers troubled by the brutality their fellows were imposing on the people. Tactics took primacy over strategy in counterinsurgency, and they were seldom, if ever, applied with minimum force.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF REFERENCES

Anderson, David. "British Abuse and Torture in Kenya's Counter-insurgency, 1952–1960." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (September 2012): 700–719.

Bennett, Huw. "Minimum Force in British Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 21, no. 3 (2010): 429–475.

———. 2007. "The Other Side of the COIN: Minimum and Exemplary Force in British Army Counterinsurgency in Kenya." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18, no. 4, 638–664.

———. 2007. "The Mau Mau Emergency as Part of the British Army's Post-War Counter-Insurgency Experience." *Defense and Security Analysis* 23, no. 2, 143–163.

Carruthers, Susan. *Winning Hearts and Minds.* New York: Leicester University Press, 1995.

Callwell, C. E. *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice.* London: General Staff, War Office, 1906.

Cesarani, David. *Major Farran's Hat.* Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2009.

Chappell, Stephen. "Airpower in the Mau Mau Conflict: The Government's Chief Weapon," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 22, no. 3 (2011): 495–525.

Donnelly Jr., James. "Big House Burnings in County Cork During the Irish Revolution, 1920–21." *Ireland* 47, no. 3&4 (Fall / Winter 2012): 141–197.

———. 2010. "Unofficial' British Reprisals and IRA Provocations, 1919–1920: The Cases of Three Cork Towns," *Ireland* 45. No 1–2; 152–197.

Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency.* Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 2006.

French, David. "Nasty Not Nice: British Counter-Insurgency Doctrine and Practice, 1945–1967." Small *Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (December 2012): 744–761.

———. 2011. *The British Way in Counter Insurgency, 1945–1967.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Galula, David. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice.* Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006.

Gwynn, Charles. *Imperial Policing.* MacMillan and Company: London, 1936.

Hack, Karl. "Everyone Lived in Fear: Malaya and the British Way of Counter-insurgency." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (2012): 671-699.

Hughes, Matthew. "Assassination in Jerusalem: Bahjat Abu Gharbiya and Sami Al-Ansari's Shooting of British Assistant Superintendent Alan Sigrist 12th June 1936," http://www.jerusalemquarterly.org/images/ArticlesPdf /44_Assassination%20in%20jerusalem.pdf,

Hunter Commission Report, page 64. http://archive.org/stream/ape9901.0001.001 .umich.edu/ape9901.0001.001.umich.edu_djvu.txt

Kitson, Frank. *A Bunch of Five.* London: Faber and Faber, 1977.

———. *Low Intensity Operations.* London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1971.

Leeson, D.M. *The Black and Tans.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Mockaitis, Thomas. "The Minimum Force Debate: Contemporary Sensibilities Meet Imperial Practice," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (2012): 762–780.

———. "Minimum Force, British Counter-Insurgency and the Mau Mau Rebellion: A Reply," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 3, no. 2 (1992): 87–89.

———. *British Counterinsurgency 1919–60.* New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1990.

Nagl, John. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Newsinger, John. "Minimum Force, British Counter-Insurgency and the Mau Mau Rebellion," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 3, no. 1 (1992): 47–57.

Reis, Bruno. "The Myth of British Minimum Force in Counterinsurgency Campaigns During Decolonization (1945–1970)," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 2011): 245–279.

Robbins, Simon. "The British Counter-Insurgency in Cyprus," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (2012): 720–743.

Sheehan, William. *A Hard Local War: The British Army and the Guerilla War in Cork 1919–1921.* Gloucestershire: Spellmount, 2011.

Sinclair, Georgina. *At the End of the Line: Colonial Policing and the Imperial Endgame, 1945–80.* New York: Manchester University Press, 2006.

Simson, H.J. *British Rule and Rebellion.* London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1937.

Strachan, Hew. *The Politics of the British Army.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1997.

Thompson, Robert. *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam.* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966.

Townshend, Charles. "The Defense of Palestine: Insurrection and Public Security, 1936–1939." *The English Historical Review* 103, no. 409 (October, 1988): 917–949.

Thornton, Rod. "The British Army and the Origins of Its Minimum Force Philosophy." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 15, no. 1 (2004): 83–106.

———. "'Minimum Force': A Reply to Huw Bennett." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 20, no. 1 (April 2009): 215–226.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center
   Ft. Belvoir, Virginia

2. Dudley Knox Library
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California